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Studies in Oral Folk Literature

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Presentació

Presentation

La vitalitat del folklore és inqüestionable. Si bé és cert que determinades formes o manifestacions (que es poden classificar o agrupar per gèneres en un intent de sistematitzar-ne l'estudi) han quedat avui dia obsoletes, d'altres han agafat força amb la presència i l'ús constant que fem avui dia d'Internet i de les xarxes socials. Aquest onzè número de la revista n'és una bona mostra. Plantejat com un monogràfic sobre les llegendes contemporànies, el resultat, format per cinc articles publicats tots ells en anglès, evidencia especialment aquestes formes que van més enllà d'aquest gènere narratiu i que troben en les formes actuals de comunicació el millor espai on moure's, difondre's i expandir-se, reflectint, alhora, tot allò que ens preocupa avui dia.

The vitality of folklore is undeniable. While it is true that certain forms or manifestations – which can be classified or grouped by genres in an attempt to systematise their study – have become obsolete today, others have gained strength through the presence and constant use of the internet and social networks. The eleventh issue of this journal is a good example of this. Conceived as a monograph on contemporary legends, the result comprises five articles, all published in English. It especially illustrates forms that go beyond the narrative genre and that find an ideal space in which to move, propagate and expand in current means of communication, while at the same time reflecting everything that concerns us today.

El monogràfic s'obre amb l'article de Petr Janeček, de l'Institute of Ethnology de la Charles University de Praga: «Prague ghostlore of the late 19th century. Urban poltergeists between moral panic and vernacular spectacle», que aporta una mirada històrica. Janeček estudia l'aparició dels fantasmes als barris industrials de les classes treballadores de Praga el 1876 i el 1907 i la reacció de la classe mitjana davant d'aquest fenomen, amb una actitud ben diferent de la que mostrarien quan aquest fenomen de fantasmes (i caçafantasmes) va entrar a la cultura popular en forma de cançons, memòries i literatura.

Eda Kalmre, del Departament de Folklore de l'Estonian Literary Museum analitza a «Nature Returns: Dolphins and Dinosaurs. On Fake News, Photoshop Urban Legends and Memes during the COVID-19 Lockdown» un fenomen ben recent com són les publicacions i notícies falses que van circular per les xarxes socials durant els primers mesos de la quarantena provocada per la COVID-19 segons les quals la reducció de la contaminació tindria un efecte positiu en la natura. Kalmre centra l'atenció en l'aspecte visual i la seva relació amb el concepte de versemblança tenint en compte el context d'aquell moment i l'ús de l'humor.

L'aportació de Theo Meder, del Meertens Instituut d'Amsterdam, parteix de la seva experiència personal. A «THE NIGERIAN SCAM 2.0. How an improved online scam trick made an unsuspecting Dutch man over 20.000 euros poorer» explica detalladament un cas d'estafa operat a Facebook a causa del qual una persona va perdre una suma considerable de diners. Meder ressegueix i documenta aquest cas, des de la petició d'amistat a Facebook d'un suposat advocat britànic fins a l'adver-

The monograph opens with an article by Petr Janeček of the Institute of Ethnology at Charles University in Prague, "Prague Ghostlore of the Late 19th Century: Urban Poltergeists between Moral Panic and Vernacular Spectacle", which provides a historical perspective on the topic. Janeček examines the appearance of ghosts in industrial working-class neighbourhoods in Prague in 1876 and 1907 and discusses how the middle classes reacted to this phenomenon with a very different attitude than when ghosts (and ghost hunters) entered popular culture in the form of songs, memoirs and literature.

In "Nature Returns: Dolphins and Dinosaurs – On Fake News, Photoshop Urban Legends and Memes during the COVID-19 Lockdown", Eda Kalmre of the Folklore Department at the Estonian Literary Museum analyses a very recent phenomenon. The article addresses posts and fake news circulating on social networks in the initial months of the COVID-19 quarantine claiming that reduced pollution would have a positive effect on nature. Kalmre focuses on the visual and its relationship with the concept of verisimilitude, taking into account the context of that unusual time and the use of humour.

The contribution of Theo Meder of the Meertens Instituut in Amsterdam is based on his own personal experience. In "THE NIGERIAN SCAM 2.0: How an Improved Online Scam Trick Made an Unsuspecting Dutchman Poorer by More Than 20,000 Euros", Meder examines in detail the case of a Facebook scam in which a person lost a considerable amount of money. The article summarises and documents the case from the Facebook friend request of a supposed British lawyer to a warning

tència de l'estafa que, malauradament, la víctima no va veure a temps.

Des de la University of Athens de Grècia, Aphrodite-Lidia Nounanaki i Rea Kakampoura presenten «Localised' and 'unlocated' contemporary legends and their function on the Greek internet» on analitzen com les llegendes gregues actuals que circulen per la xarxa no porten associat un lloc concret. Aquests relats, representats habitualment com a incidents terrorífics patits per persones aleatòries en moments i llocs no especificats, han perdut, doncs, la seva connexió espacial. Les autores es pregunten quin sentit té aquesta pèrdua i si això afecta l'impacte que poden tenir aquestes històries.

Finalment, tanca el monogràfic Emili Samper Prunera de la Universitat Rovira i Virgili amb «Politics, folklore and humour: the case of Sant Esteve de les Roures» on analitza una de les reaccions que es van produir després dels fets de l'1 d'octubre del 2017 a Catalunya, amb les càrregues i la violència exercida pels cossos policials a la ciutadania que volia votar en el referèndum d'autodeterminació. Fruit d'un error de la Guàrdia Civil, va néixer el poble de Sant Esteve de les Roures, que va tenir una existència efímera, exclusivament virtual, però molt activa i que mostra l'ús catàrtic que pot tenir l'humor en situacions conflictives.

Aquest onzè número inclou cinc ressenyes que recullen una tipologia diversa d'obres recents d'interès per als estudiosos de la literatura popular. D'aquesta manera, s'analitzen les publicacions següents: *Folklore Concepts: Histories and Critics* de Dan Ben-Amos (2020), *Cuentos del Sáhara Argelino recogidos por el P. Yves Alliaume* de Francisco Moscoso (2021), *Catalogue of Galician Folktales* de Camiño Noia (2021), *Manual d'oralitat en set jornades i set contes* de Roser Ros

regarding the scam, which the victim unfortunately did not see in time.

Aphrodite-Lidia Nounanaki and Rea Kakampoura of the University of Athens in Greece, present "'Localised' and 'Unlocated': Contemporary Legends and Their Function on the Greek Internet", which analyses how modern-day Greek legends on the internet have no specific location associated with them. These stories, usually represented as terrifying incidents involving random people at unspecified times and places, have lost their spatial connection. The authors contemplate what this loss means and whether it affects the impact these stories can have.

Lastly, Emili Samper Prunera of Rovira i Virgili University in Catalonia closes the monograph with "Politics, Folklore and Humour: The Case of Sant Esteve De Les Roures", which analyses one of the reactions to the events of 1 October 2017 in Catalonia, when police forces perpetrated assaults and violence against citizens who wanted to vote in the referendum on Catalan self-determination. Through an error made by the Guardia Civil, the village of Sant Esteve de les Roures was born into an ephemeral and exclusively virtual existence. The village, though non-existent, was nevertheless very active, illustrating the effect humour can have in situations of conflict.

This eleventh issue includes five reviews covering a diverse range of recent works of interest to scholars of popular literature. The publications analysed are *Folklore Concepts: Histories and Critics* by Dan Ben-Amos (2020), *Cuentos del Sáhara Argelino recogidos por el P. Yves Alliaume* (Stories collected by Father Yves Alliaume in the Algerian Sahara) by Francisco Moscoso (2021), *Catalogue of Galician Folktales* by Camiño Noia (2021), *Manual d'oralitat*

(2020) i *Corpus de fraseologia de les Illes Balears* de Bàrbara Sagrera (2019).

Quant a la crònica d'esdeveniments acadèmics relacionats amb la literatura popular, aquest número inclou la descripció del III Congreso Internacional «Poéticas de la Oralidad» (8-12/II/2021), la Jornada de la Càtedra Baixeras dedicada a «Mirades interdisciplinàries sobre la llegenda i el mite» (9-10/II/2021), la XVI Trobada del Grup d'Estudis Etnopoètics celebrada a Girona i dedicada a «La representació etnopoètica del mal» (11-13/II/2021) i, finalment, l'acte d'homenatge a Josep Massot i Muntaner amb motiu del seu 80è aniversari celebrat a l'Institut d'Estudis Catalans (13/12/2021).

No podem tancar aquesta presentació sense tenir, precisament, unes paraules de record al pare Massot que el 24 d'abril del 2022 ens deixava orfes de la seva saviesa i bonhomia, com encertadament diu Caterina Valriu a la darrera crònica. Des de l'equip editorial de la revista ens sumem al dol per la seva pèrdua i a l'homenatge pòstum dedicant aquest número de la revista a la seva memòria. Membre del comitè científic des del primer dia, Josep Massot i Muntaner va acceptar amb agraïment aquesta tasca i també ens ha acompanyat, amb el seu mestratge i amb la seva saviesa, en aquesta mateixa publicació amb l'article «Cartes de Palmira Jaqueti a Rafael Patxot i Jubert (1938-1939)» que curosament va preparar per al número 9, publicat el 2020. La seva pèrdua ens deixa un gran buit intel·lectual i afectiu, però la seva autoexigència per fer la feina ben feta és un valor que ens acompanyarà sempre.

EMILI SAMPER PRUNERA
Universitat Rovira i Virgili

en set jornades i set contes (Manual of orality in seven seminars and seven stories) by Roser Ros (2020) and *Corpus de fraseologia de les Illes Balears* (Corpus of phraseology of the Balearic Islands) by Bàrbara Sagrera (2019).

This issue also chronicles academic events related to popular literature, including a description of the Third International Poetics of Orality Conference (8-12/II/2021), the Baixeras Chair conference on the topic of "Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Legend and Myth" (9-10/II/2021), the 16th Ethnopoetic Studies Group meeting held in Girona dedicated to "The Ethnopoetic Representation of Evil" (11-13/II/2021), and lastly, a tribute to Josep Massot i Muntaner on the occasion of his 80th birthday held at the Institute for Catalan Studies (13/12/2021).

This introduction would be incomplete without a few words in remembrance of Father Massot, who on 24 April 2022 left us orphans of his wisdom and kindness, as Caterina Valriu rightly says in the final chronicle. The journal's editorial team shares in the grief of his loss and dedicates this issue of the journal to his memory. Josep Massot i Muntaner was a member of the scientific committee from the first day, a task he gratefully accepted. He also shared with us his mastery and wisdom in this publication with the article "Letters from Palmira Jaqueti to Rafael Patxot i Jubert (1938-1939)", which he thoughtfully prepared for issue 9, published in 2020. His loss leaves us with a great intellectual and emotional void, but his commitment to a job well done is a value that will always be with us.

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Articles

Articles



Prague ghostlore of the late 19th century. Suburban ghosts between moral panic and vernacular spectacle

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ABSTRACT

In the mid-1870s, a wave of popular urban hauntings in public spaces swept across Europe. These included sightings of the Park Ghost in Sheffield in 1873 and the Westminster Christ Church Ghost in London in 1874. In early December 1874, probably the most famous Czech ghost, the Podskálí Apparition (Podskalské strašidlo), was born. This haunting was followed by that of similar but less popular ghosts that appeared in industrial, working-class Prague neighborhoods in 1876 and 1907, respectively. This paper analyzes newspaper articles from this period about these apparitions and their later depictions in Czech popular culture, and interprets these phenomena as local variants of the so-called “prowling ghosts”, a particular type of suburban phantom documented by current historiographical research on 19th-century ghostlore in England. The paper then describes how these Prague ghosts were utilized socially by two completely different cultural practices. On one hand, these hauntings were used by working-class people as vernacular spectacles and improvised festivities related to pranks, the symbolic occupation of public space, and Czech nationalism. For the middle classes and period newspapers loyal to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, on the other hand, unruly mobs converging on the sites of supposed hauntings were a threat to established social norms and triggered both moral panics and public scorn of these “ghost hunters”. However, this attitude changed quickly when these events entered popular culture in the form of popular songs and, later, memoirs and literature. Between the Belle Époque at the First World War, these famous Prague hauntings were the staple for nostalgic longing in the last few decades of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

KEYWORDS

ghost; haunting; Prague; 19th century; legend

FOLKLORE DE FANTASMES A LA PRAGA DE FINALS DEL SEGLE XIX. FANTASMES SUBURBANS, ENTRE EL PÀNIC MORAL I L'ESPECTACLE VERNACLE

RESUM

A mitjans de la dècada de 1870, l'onada de fantasmes urbans populars als espais públics va arrasar Europa, incloent Park Ghost a Sheffield el 1873 i Westminster Christ Church Ghost a Londres el 1874. A principis de desembre de 1874, va néixer probablement el fantasma txec més famós: l'aparició de Podskali (Podskalské strašidlo), seguida de fantasmes similars però menys populars que van aparèixer als barris industrials de la classe treballadora de Praga el 1876 i el 1907, respectivament. El document, que analitza articles periodístics d'època que tracten sobre aquests fantasmes i les seves representacions posteriors a la cultura popular txeca, intenta interpretar aquests fenòmens com a variants locals dels anomenats «fantasmes vaguejadors», és a dir, un tipus peculiar de fantasma suburbà documentat per la investigació historiogràfica actual del fantasma del segle XIX a Anglaterra. Seguint aquesta interpretació, l'article intenta mostrar com aquests fantasmes de Praga eren utilitzats socialment per dues pràctiques culturals completament diferents. Per a la gent de la classe obrera, aquests embruixats eren utilitzats com a espectacles vernacles i festes improvisades relacionades amb bromes, una ocupació simbòlica de l'espai públic i el nacionalisme txec. Per a la gent de classe mitjana i els diaris d'època lleials a l'Imperi Austrohongarès, les turbes rebels que convergeixen als llocs de suposats embruixaments representaven una amenaça per a les normes socials establertes i desencadenaven tant pànics morals com menyspreu públic dels «caçadors de fantasmes». No obstant això, aquesta actitud va canviar molt ràpidament quan aquests fets van entrar a la cultura popular en forma de cançons i, posteriorment, de memòries i literatura. Des de la Belle Époque a principis del segle XX, aquests famosos embruixats de Praga es van convertir en un element bàsic de l'enyorança nostàlgica de les últimes dècades de l'Imperi Austrohongarès abans de la Primera Guerra Mundial.

PARAULES CLAU

fantasma; inquietant; Praga; segle XIX; llegenda

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1. Introduction¹

In early December 1874, arguably the most famous Czech ghost, the Podskalí Apparition (*Podskalské strašidlo*) began to haunt this quirky Prague river-rafter neighborhood over a period of several weeks. Similar but less popular ghosts later appeared in industrial working-class Prague neighborhoods in 1876 and 1907, respectively. These urban hauntings were once neglected by folkloristic and/or historiographical research. One of the reasons for this was their peculiar class dynamics: unlike the learned spiritism of the bourgeoisie and the ghost stories of traditional rural folk culture, these working-class hauntings were difficult to interpret, save for shallow notions of the antics of “superstitious workmen”.

This article employs content analysis of printed documents from the period (mainly newspaper and literary sources) to document, analyze and interpret these phenomena from the concept of the so-called prowling ghosts (developed by recent social history) and compare them with similar cultural practices from the same period from beyond Central Europe – mainly from England (where the most thorough studies of this phenomenon have been conducted). After a brief discussion of the research on ghosts in contemporary humanities, the concept of the prowling ghost is introduced and the Podskalí Apparition of 1874 is presented in detail from newspaper sources of the period. The second life of this ghost in the popular culture and literature of that period is then presented. A similar discussion of its spiritual successor, the Libeň Ghost of the Belle Époque, then follows.

2. Research on ghosts in contemporary humanities

Investigations into an imaginary figure such as a ghost – i.e., something that “did not exist” – could be perceived from certain theoretical positions as problematic. However, the author asserts that this kind of skepticism in contemporary humanities – after the linguistic, interpretive, performative, reflexive, cultural, rhetorical and, especially, the mnemonic and ontological turns are taken into account – is entirely unwarranted.² In the last few decades, studies dealing with folkloric ghosts have appeared with increasing frequency in cultural and social history, where they could be considered practically “traditional” today. As the folklorist and social historian Owen Davies tells us, one of the main historical arguments for the unreality of spirits and specters was always the fact that they were almost never sighted by more than one person at a time. However, we could also turn the same argument around to emphasize the significance of historical research into these imaginary visions because, since a great many people in various historical periods and cultures have seen spirits and specters, they are a social phenomenon worthy of research interest (Davies 2007: 13). According to the historian Jacob Middleton, ghost stories reflect the important cultural themes

¹ Parts of this study have appeared in a different form in the Czech language in two chapters of the book by Janeček (2017). The whole text, translated into English by Dr. Melinda Reiding, has been thoroughly amended and updated.

² For the most recent comprehensive overview of (some) of these turns, see Bachman-Medick (2016). Also see Kóresaar (2014) on the relationship between the mnemonic turn and folklore studies.

of their periods – primarily, class and religious conflicts and a mythologized fear of criminality, subjects whose reflections we find only with difficulty in other kinds of sources (Middleton 2014: xii).

We can also uphold the relevance of research into 19th-century Czech ghostlore with the assertion by sociologist Avery F. Gordon that, although some phenomena of “fictitious” apparitions and ghosts may at first glance be perceived as unusual, marginal or even bizarre subjects for social science disciplines conducting research on current social realities, there is no reason to neglect them at the expense of other, only seemingly “more real”, creations of the social imagination (Gordon 2008: 7, 27). In the past, only psychoanalysis, folkloristics and, to a certain degree, religious studies considered apparitions and phantoms to be serious matters for research. However, a great many other disciplines have joined these in recent decades, including ethnology and cultural anthropology. Today we can therefore boldly claim that “... in the context of modern anthropology, as long as people believe that something is real, it is real” (Tonkin; McDonald; Chapman 2016: 9). In recent years, especially after the “ghost turn in the social sciences” associated with the concept of the “uncanny”, interest in this subject has clearly also grown in other social sciences (Gibas 2012).

3. Prowling ghosts between urban and rural culture

The urban ghosts connected with the laboring classes as a *sui generis* phenomenon were rediscovered by historical scholars only fairly recently. This is because historiographical interest in the issue of revenants had traditionally focused on hauntings in the spheres of learned and elite culture, which was available for analysis through written and iconographic sources, whereas the ephemeral manifestations of the cultures of the manually-laboring classes were neglected. Meanwhile, folkloristics (or folklore studies) that conducted research into the “supernatural” put the main accent on rural or traditional folk culture, which was accessible for analysis through sources of an oral nature that were usually categorized into the folkloric genres of legends and for a long time disregarded urban phenomena. Phantoms connected with the proletarian culture of industrialized cities therefore represent a doubly strange “revenant discourse” that lies outside both educated/elite culture and folk culture. Distinct from scholarly conceptualizations of the afterworld, the elitist aristocratic and bourgeois spiritism and occultism, and the archaic rural demonical beings of folk culture, these “working-class spooks” are a relatively neglected cultural phenomenon of a syncretic nature that straddles the boundaries of verbal folklore, cultural practices and public spectacles and is extremely interesting owing to its liminal positioning between vernacular and popular culture.

This peculiar kind of apparition can probably be best analyzed by employing the concept of the so-called *prowling ghosts*. According to historian Jacob Middleton, *prowling ghosts* were one of the two ideal types of cultural understanding of ghosts in the 19th century, a phenomenon that was at first popular, then suburban, and finally became part of urban proletarian culture. With a tradition that can be documented as far back as the 17th century, these ghosts drew upon vernacular practices that usually featured apparitions (usually people in costumes) in public spaces. The second ideal type of the “modern” ghost of the 19th century was the

literary ghost. By contrast, this was associated with the intimate environment of the household and salons, a phenomenon of elite and later of bourgeois culture with a poetics and esthetics drawn from Gothic novels and, later, “scientific” spiritism and occultism, which, for many reasons, are easier for us to appreciate today (Middleton 2014: VIII-XVIII).³

Unlike the more intimately situated literary phantoms, prowling ghosts are inherently connected with the public space. Starting in the second half of the 18th century, they appeared in just about every English city as a feature of the specific culture of the manually laboring classes and later in the proletarian milieu. They enjoyed their heyday around the mid-19th century. One of the prowling ghosts’ most distinctive habits was their constant movement, “prowling” for unsuspecting passersby on the outskirts of large cities (this gave rise to their name and distinguishes them from the more static literary phantoms that were bound to specific sites). Period interpretations did not believe them to be spectral apparitions but real masked individuals (often aristocrats who behaved in this way because of a bet, or local ruffians who attacked women) with certain “supernatural” qualities, most often the ability to take inhuman leaps, shining garments, invulnerability to bullets or breathe fire, all of which were at the time “rationally” explicable through inventions or technological innovations.

The appearance of these phantoms, whether merely in narrative rumors and legends or in the form of activities of pranksters and imitators who, inspired by the narratives, went out marauding in disguise, often culminated in a “ghost panic”. However, this term can be somewhat misleading because it is constructed “from above” by the elite culture or sometimes by journalists. In this regard, it displays certain parallels with the modern concept of moral panic (Cohen 2002). In its essence, ghost panic was an informal mass encounter assembled for the purpose of collectively sniffing out and hunting down the prowling ghosts, who were usually young male manual laborers. For them, these encounters predominantly represented a kind of semi-spontaneous festivity, a cheap and popular form of urban entertainment. For the middle classes and their press, ghost panic usually represented an entertaining spectacle as well as an opportunity for moralizing.

This socially clearly-defined cluster of folkloric narratives and cultural practices soon became welcome sources of inspiration for newly-emerging genres of popular news reporting and mass-produced popular culture – especially penny-dreadful books and popular theater performances (Bell 2012: 73–141).

4. The Podskalí Apparition of 1874

The end of November and the beginning of December 1874 saw the appearance of the most famous Czech phantom of the 19th century: the *Podskalské strašidlo*, or *Podskalí Apparition*, which haunted the quirky Prague river-rafter and lumberjack quarter of Podskalí. This quarter was famous at the time for its peculiar dialect, suburban culture, and popularity as a beloved destination for day-tripping middle-class city dwellers.

³ On today’s perception of ghosts in vernacular culture see, for example, Bennett (1999) and Thomas (2015). For more, see, for example, Cowdell (2014).

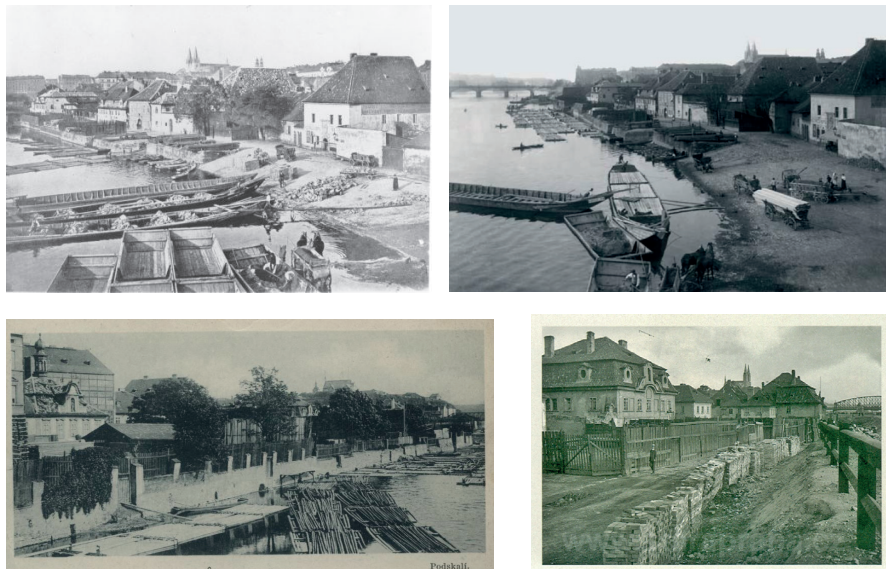


Fig. 1. Prague river-rafter and lumberjack quarter of Podskalí in the late 1800s.
Private archive of Petr Janeček.

Numerous Prague personalities reminisced about this event even decades after it transpired – especially the novelist who wrote about Old Prague, Ignát Hermann (YPSILON 1923),⁴ and the writer and collector of legends, Popelka Biliánová. Forty years later, in 1905, Biliánová wrote that the Podskalí Apparition “... in this period thrilled the imagination of Praguers more than today’s Russian-Japanese War” (Biliánová 1905: 247–250). The Podskalí phantom was primarily of an acoustic nature, manifesting itself in a series of strange sounds suggestive of blowing horns that were heard for several weeks beginning on 30 November 1874 in the house and adjacent wood-fenced yard of a Mr. Procházka in Podskalská Street 1/354, near the ferry launch at a place called “Na paletě” or “U Turků”:

At the beginning of December 1874, we youths of the time overheard that something extraordinary was taking place in Podskalí. It was only whispered about so that we would not be distracted at work. Even the police themselves were keeping it secret and they only produced an official report about it a week or so later. Whereas in Prague it was well known that something was haunting Podskalí (Ypsilon 1923).

A week after the strange activities began, the event was covered on the first page of the Sunday Czech-language periodical *Národní listy* (*National Newspaper*) in the column “Daily news”, right after a sensationalistic report under the title “Loupežná vražda” [“robbery and murder”] that exoticized the then faraway realm of Moravia (“In Moravia, robberies and murder are increasing in an uncommon manner ...”).

⁴ For the revised editions, see Hermann (1924) and Hermann (1970).

The Phantom in Podskalí.

Podskalí is haunted – this report has been floating around Prague for several days; everyone laughs, few people believe it, but towards the evening Podskalská Street is full of the inquisitive who go out seeking the phantom. For the nonce, it cannot be seen but only heard. At midnight, nine prolonged sounds like blowing on a horn are always heard: thus, the phantom announces his nightly patrol. The inhabitants of the nearby buildings, especially the women, are terrified, and the most various tales circulate about an apparition which no one has seen, even though a good many of them describe him in great detail. They say it is a white figure that gazes mournfully as though someone had dreadfully wronged it. The house where the manifestations appear used to belong to the Jesuit Order and it is said that the Jesuits have been recently endeavoring to purchase it again, which would perhaps be a little glint of light in the entire swarm of the dark and nonsensical stories that are circulating about the spook. As a result of these tales, the police found it necessary to intervene. An inspector was dispatched with a strong patrol squad, and they occupy that building and the street. The night before last there were perhaps 300 curious onlookers. And truly, at midnight the prolonged sound was heard nine times. Fear took hold of everyone. The police thoroughly searched the building, but did not find anyone. The phantom announced itself, but has not been seen. Today, the police patrol will await the phantom for the second time (*Strašidlo v Podskalí*, 13 December 1874).

In the same issue, a second reporter offered information that the Imperial-Royal gendarmes had been secretly searching for the phantom without success since Monday, and added details about the fantastic tales connected with it. According to the reporter, the phantom began sounding off with its horn earlier, at ten o'clock at night, and continued until midnight. Crowds of people from the suburbs and from Prague's New and Old Towns had been hearing the mysterious sounds since three o'clock in the afternoon. These were joined by a growing number of officials that finally comprised ten Imperial-Royal police guards with their bayonets fixed in place, two police commissioners, and six secret police officers:

Starting at 8 o'clock the guards were posted ten paces apart, and there were also several stationed inside the yard. More and more people continued gathering and at 10 o'clock there were already more than 400. It was quiet as the grave for perhaps half an hour, and in this silence it was possible to hear a muffled, minute-long sound of "tooooo". One constable heard it from behind his head, another heard it under his feet in the sewer, yet another heard it behind the fence, etc.: in short, a general panic arose. Many of the onlookers were quaking like aspens, but the police had no fear of the phantom and instead energetically endeavored to discover his whereabouts; though, alas, all was in vain. By midnight, the phantom had made its trumpeting sound nine times, after which it vanished, but not at all like ordinary spooks which only come out to disport themselves between midnight and 1 am. When the police heard no more of its "toooo" by two o'clock, they left. Altogether, according to

the police logs, the phantom has already blown its horn 72 times and it will probably continue to blow on it if it will have such a large audience as it has enjoyed so far. Yesterday, a new campaign against the phantom was launched and 18 Imperial-Royal gendarmes were dispatched to hunt him out. Whether they captured him we will tell you – tomorrow (Strašidlo v Podskalí, 13 December 1874).

The next day, the slightly disconcerted but mainly amused readers of *Národní listy* were treated to an article about the next move the police intended to take against the phantom. However, the clustering crowds of curious onlookers evidently caused greater problems than the spirit itself:

At 11 o'clock in the yard after the phantom had sounded its horn all at once a clicking sound and an unusual huffing and panting began. Several of the constables burst inside the building and with their bayonets fixed in place they undertook to capture the phantom, which was heard panting near the woodpile and jumping around in the lumber stacks. A round of laughter arose: in Procházka's dangerous yard offered up a pair of amorous cats having a rendezvous. After 12 o'clock the throng was ordered to disperse; however, the people pretended not to understand. Thereupon, Inspector Rost went to fetch twelve police constables, who cleared the streets and dispersed the crowds. However, one hot-blooded goldsmith's apprentice, F. Hevera, wanted to see the phantom at all costs, and on account of not "dispersing" immediately, he was taken into custody. Therefore, the police still did not manage to capture the phantom. Yesterday, all day long, there were several police officers stationed around Procházka's yard as sentinels and they did not allow anyone to pause there for even a moment. In the evening, from 7 o'clock until 1 o'clock in the morning all the streets around the yard there were strong police detachments turning everyone away from the area near the yard. However, regardless of its besiegement the phantom remained undaunted and continued to sound its horn, but now only for the constables since there were no other spectators, and it was still impossible to capture it. The jester's lark, by all accounts, had been a marvelous success (Výpravu proti strašidlu v Podskalí... 14 December 1874).

Národní listy also reported on the phantom of Podskalí the next day:

The phantom is still haunting Podskalí. It can truly be said that there are few ghosts that have caused such an uproar among Earthlings as the one in Mr. Procházka's yard. Every day around a hundred, and last Sunday even some thousand people – and in addition, entire platoons of police. On Sunday, as we have already said, all of the surrounding streets were closed, but the phantom paid no heed and haunted there once more. The drawn-out sound of its trumpet was heard again, though it was only heard by those who were standing closest to the yard; ergo, mainly police officers and those whom Mr. Procházka had summoned to investigate in which way and from where the sound was produced. Till now, all the proceedings have been in vain. Mr. Procházka, as we were given to understand, had intended to invite the bugler from Mr. Holý's Czech theatre in order to discover whether the sound was produced by a trumpet

or another brass instrument. Panic has taken hold in the surrounding buildings; however, on the other hand, the local pubs are thriving, and are thronged with guests telling the most curious tales about the phantom of Podskalí, as well about others, all night long until the day breaks. The most interesting thing, which is truly very droll, is to observe the people who are waiting for the phantom and for twelve o'clock. We went to have a gander, not at the phantom, but at the audience (*Strašidlo v Podskalí ještě straší* 15 December 1874).

The reporter then continues in his indulgent middle-class, proto-ethnographic “observing people” mode describing, in the style of reportage, the antics of the supposedly superstitious working class. The perception of the “phantom” then comes through in three dimensions from participants in the spectacle:

We take our kind reader along with us. We go at eleven thirty, there are several of us, and therefore we are not afraid of the apparition. The streets are packed like a tin of sardines. Thanks to the favors of a policeman we are able to get close to the site. It is just before midnight. Tense with anticipation. The public's laughter and noise fall silent. From inside, the strokes of midnight ring out! There is a general admonition of: “Shhh, Shhh!” and it is completely silent. The last of the twelve peals had struck: no apparition at all. A voice from among the people, a large, muscular man who everyone else stands at shoulder height next to: “That phantom's watch isn't working!” “They're going to fix it for him!” is the reply, and everyone around laughs. “Quiet, there!” another cries, “You'll frighten the phantom!” A bell tolls from another tower. “Well, he's probably going by that clock!” chimes in Kačenka (Katty), who is pressing up against her swain, while at the same time secretly squeezing her neighbor's hand: the poor thing is afraid of ghosts, so she has to cling to the living. “Troo-too!” some wild beast blows through his fist. “Fool, what, are you the phantom?” his friend scolds, and everyone laughs. At that moment, the nearby lanterns were extinguished. The twelfth peal sounded and the town was no longer illuminated for its citizens. There was a general cry: “Hooray! Long live the dark!” (*Strašidlo v Podskalí ještě straší* 15 December 1874).

The report goes on to describe another unsuccessful police raid, which then broke up the assembled crowds. The same issue also contained a continuation of the story entitled “Now they have him, now they don't”, which, as well as describing the hunt for the phantom, informed readers about the arrest of a watchman at the nearby enclosures belonging to the Lann family, who had been taken into custody by an officer of the secret police for imitating the trumpeting sound. After a four-hour interrogation, however, he was released (*Strašidlo v Podskalí ještě straší* 15 December 1874). A feuilleton entitled “*Pravda o strašidle v Podskalí*” [The Truth About the Phantom in Podskalí] published on the front page of *Národní listy* on 16 December 1874 became the phantom's swan song. In an “investigative” and at the same time humorous manner, it “debunked” (perhaps partially under pressure from the authorities) the case for middle-class readers by reporting it as the hijinks of an anonymous prankster blowing on a cheap wooden children's horn, and exhorted the “public” to stop paying attention to the phantom:

Falsehoods and the most foolish fabrications were written, and were spoken even more, about the Podskalí phantom, to the point where a little needle of truth could probably be found in that haystack. And the entire public, not excepting the police, who have been so saturated with these falsehoods that to this day they still have not fathomed what happened (Pravda o strašidle v Podskalí 16 December 1874).

The part criticizing the newspaper reports that amplified the panic was rather hypocritical (they were printed in the same paper, which itself had helped to incite the panic several days earlier). The synergy between the vernacular and popular culture was once again mediated through a patronizing middle-class tone typical of a newspaper covering ghost panics and forbearing towards the bizarre excesses of the superstitious but fascinating urban “folk”: “These examples themselves allow us to conjecture what sort of curious and monstrous tales are being told among the folk. The fantasy of the people, fed by journalistic fables, lead them to believe in a genuine phantom.” (Pravda o strašidle v Podskalí, 16 December 1874).

To conclude, the piece then pronounced an “authoritative” explanation for the phantom of Podskalí (which all of a sudden was referred to as a “phantom” only in quotation marks) and appealed to the restraint and empathy of the readers of *Národní listy*:

There cannot be any doubts that this is some watchman or someone else known in the enclosure who is making a fool of the entire area and all its inhabitants, and he is laughing at how he cried wolf to the entire city of Prague and they fell for it. This much seems to be certain: concourses of people and police guards are most likely irritating the “phantom,” and because capturing it is very difficult it may still delude the public and bedevil the family of Mr. Procházka with its wanton pranks for a few more weeks. This second matter is serious, and should be acknowledged by the public so that it would not become a source of vexation for the entire neighborhood. No one there still pays attention to the “phantom’s” horns; just let the public understand that there is only one correct answer – to ignore the “phantom” and cease to disturb the peace of all of Podskalí (Pravda o strašidle v Podskalí 16 December 1874).

5. Podskalí Apparition in popular culture of the period

It appears that the case of the Podskalí phantom later brought about a paradigm shift in the contents of the newspaper. The following issues, for example, began to indulge readers’ appetite for emotions, which had been whipped up by the phantom’s rampage, with increasing reports of murders and other acts of violence in the Austro-Hungarian Empire and beyond. In conjunction with his banishment from print, this was the beginning of the phantom’s shift towards a comic figure of mass-mediated popular culture, at least for the middle classes. As early as 19 December 1874, this is how the Podskalí phantom was depicted in a comic poem by “Emanuel Pyšišvor” (the pseudonym of Czech humoristic writer Josef Hubáček) in *Humoristické listy*, which suggested ending the fruitless hunt

for the phantom with a raid by a “strong Podskalí fellow” who would catch the phantom and turn it over to the authorities (Pišišvor 1874: 252).⁵

The popularity of the Podskalí phantom was exploited by the popular culture of the period also in other ways. On New Year's Eve 1874 an anonymously composed text printed as a broadside ballad was submitted to the censors. Composed in an intentionally archaizing style with the humorous title of “Strassidlo w Podskalí” (*Apparition in Podskalí*), it reflected on the hunt for the phantom in comic fashion:

People, hearken to me
About what happened in Podskalí
On his perch a phantom set
Himself to play a tyke's cornet.

At eventide it got dark fast
In Podskalí each person gasped
For the devil at such times
Did jab the phantom with his tines.

Tra-ra, too-too-too, like the horns of hunters
Then the clinks of horsemen's spurs
All the phantom's noisy riot
Rather robbed them of their quiet.
(Strassidlo w Podskalí 1875)⁶

⁵ Many thanks to researcher Jaromír Tlustý for informing me about the identity of the author.

⁶ The full title of the song was *Strassidlo w Podskalí. Ukrutná panychyda, sepsaná potmě u příwozu na postrach wssem newěrným pannám a růženečkářkám, a na výstrahu wssem trumpetům od cibil i militér na swětlo boží wydaná od dwou se milujících Franců*. Prague: Steinhauer a Novák, 1875. The translation of the text into English doggerel, using weak rhymes, slightly irregular rhythms, and deliberate archaisms, is proposed by Melinda Reidinger. The original Czech text is:

Poslechněte lidé málo,
co jest se v Podskalí stalo.
Usedlo tam na bidlo
s dětskou trubkou strašidlo.

Když byl večer, hned se smrklo,
v Podskalí to v každém hrklo,
neboť tu hned strašidlo
počal čert brát na šidlo.

Trará, tú-tú-tú jak z waldhorny,
pak zas jak když cinkaj šporny,
tak strašidlo dělalo
a pokoje nedalo.



Fig. 2. Anonymously composed broadside ballad lyric sheet for *Strašidlo w Podskalí* from 1875. Prague City Museum archives.



Fig. 3. Karel Bendl's polka *Strašidlo v Podskalí* from 1874. Prague City Museum archives.

This popular song, whose verses mocking the police's work led to a police investigation and its confiscation in 1875, went through several reprints and spread the fame of the Podskalí beyond the readership of *Národní listy*. The phantom's definitive entrée into popular culture was then confirmed by the humorous polka *Strašidlo v Podskalí / Gespenst im Podskal (Apparition in Podskalí)* (Bendl 1874), composed anonymously during the period of the phantom's escapades by a young Karel Bendl (Podskalský) (1837–1897), who was most likely, alongside Bedřich Smetana and Antonín Dvořák, the most popular Czech composer in the second half of the 19th century. The polka gained tremendous popularity on the

Czech scene and was regularly performed in numerous settings, ranging from street recitals to masquerade balls, *ridottos*, Carnival celebrations, and theater performances until the first few decades of the 20th century (Ypsilon 1923).

However, in the vernacular culture of the manually-laboring classes, this phenomenon did not fade away by any means. A mere two years later, in October 1876, the Podskalí panic repeated itself on a smaller scale in Holešovice on the outskirts of the opposite side of Prague. There, too, strange sounds emanating from an apartment building in that neighborhood began attracting crowds over a period of several days:

For a long time, it was unknown where the widely-traduced phantom of Podskalí had relocated to, until it appeared the previous week in immoderate measure here nearby. [...] It is not necessary to illustrate how a great many avid spectators gathered each evening in order to be convinced in person about the phantom's trumpeting, and everyone was in the dark about what it should mean (Z Holešovic 27 October 1876).

However, an official inspection of the building determined that a faulty gas meter was making the sounds every evening at the same time when the coal gas used for illumination was released into the service lines.

6. International parallels of the Podskalí apparition

In 1873, just a year before the appearance of the Podskalí phantom, the “Park Ghost”, one of the most celebrated local “incarnations” of the famous Victorian phantom Spring-heeled Jack, played havoc in the English city of Sheffield. This phantom's activities, which persisted for two whole months from Easter to Pentecost, were followed by crowds of up to two thousand people, most of whom were young male manual laborers. As in Podskalí, these crowds often entered into conflicts of various sizes with the guardians of law and order. According to folklorist David Clark, Spring-heeled Jack was a typical manifestation of the workers' culture of the period that drew inspiration for this vernacular festivity both from texts of oral culture and from the “new” literature popular among young men of the time, i.e. penny dreadful novels (Clarke 2006: 38). Like in Prague, the attitude of print publications of this period towards the Sheffield phantom, which ranged from patronizing humor to moralizing judgments of the vulgarity of working class entertainments, was significantly mediated through a middle-class lens. The Prague lens was slightly milder in its evaluation, clearly on account of *Národní listy's* “more plebian” readership and the less violence that occurred during the events in Podskalí. Another parallel with those events is the London panic of 1874, which took place in the Christ Church area of Westminster only six months before the events in Podskalí. This was clearly the largest ghost panic of the 19th century as over six thousand people were caught up in it after they had visited the site to admire a likeness of the alleged ghost that had been fashioned from white paper and left hanging from a tree (Davies 2007: 91).

Unlike those in Holešovice and Westminster, the mystery of the Podskalí phantom was never officially explained. In the decades that followed, this led to it being classified in the increasingly popular Fortean “paranormal” discourse. However, as with the vast majority of similar ghost or poltergeist phenomena, these events were most likely a prank played by an unknown actor who, in all

likelihood, was an inhabitant of the “haunted” house on Podskalská Street. As the folklorist and historian Owen Davies mentions in his social history of ghosts, mysterious sounds or knocking and banging sounds have been typical manifestations of gender-defined “domestic” hauntings, which take place in the intimate space of the homes of young girls and women, who, historically, have most often been maids or other household help (Davies 2007: 172–175).⁷ Even to this day, poltergeist activities are characterized by their close relationship with the domestic environment and a clear social profile, as has been illustrated by recent comparative research conducted on over 200 contemporary cases of poltergeists in Great Britain and Germany, nearly two thirds of which were related to women, 78% of whom were under twenty years of age. According to Davies, the main motivation for these activities throughout history – besides the rebellious tendencies of adolescents – is an attempt to affect power relations within the family or household in a symbolic manner. In the past, these relations were further amplified by the social inequality between servants and their masters (Davies 2007: 177). However, “male” haunting, as opposed to “female” haunting, was historically differentiated by a stronger link with public spaces such as streets, parks, and cemeteries, though both of these gender-defined practices held the same potential for evoking the phenomenon of the “prowling ghost”. Ultimately, the Podskalí phantom is the most emphatic example of this. At the same time, however, as Jacob Middleton points out, we should not take the phenomenon of prowling ghosts as merely a joke or hoax but as a distinctive cultural practice in the form of a social “game” in which those who passed themselves off as ghosts, and those who went out to look for or to listen to them, were voluntarily acting in appropriate social roles that were firmly connected with the culture of the manually-laboring classes (Middleton 2014: XIII).

7. The Phantom of Libeň of the Belle Époque

More than thirty years later a similar phenomenon appeared on the outskirts of Prague close to the boundary between the working class quarters of Holešovice and Libeň. In 1907 the press was captivated by a new phantom that, unlike the phantom of Podskalí, is half-forgotten today. The Libeň apparition ran amok for several days in these outlying quarters of Prague, both of which had haunting grounds in the industrial periphery of the metropolis that associated them closely with the “modern” working-class culture. What set this latter-day legend apart from the Podskalí Apparition was that the phantom took a primarily human form and had a distinct appearance. Other details, such as the alleged use of phosphorus to explain its mysterious glow, are also worthy of note. Reports of the Libeň phantom appeared in both the early popular publication *Pražský illustrovaný kurýr*, intended for a broad spectrum of readers,⁸ and the middle-class *Národní politika*. In its morning edition of 20 January 1907, the latter published its first report under the sensational title “A Phantom on the Libeň Bridge” [*Strašidlo na libeňském mostě*]:

⁷ On the history of “poltergeist” cultural practices, see Davies (2007: 90).

⁸ For more on this periodical, see Machek (2009).

Libeň has been gripped by terror. The Libeň bridge is haunted, not by the legendary “horse head on chicken feet” but by a spook, a truly scary spook. This is how it happened: on Tuesday night a law-abiding and god-fearing citizen, who until the last moment had been paying reverence to the foaming Gambrinus brew in the Carnival festivities somewhere on the other side of the Libeň pile bridge, was grunting out a waggish song, stopping every once in a while to tame his frolicsome legs, which continually ran ahead of his body. Before his eyes appeared the lovely faces of beautiful masks, and in this state of mind the law-abiding little citizen stumbled towards the bridge, which he began – in a very un-engineerlike way to measure the width and length of. When he was almost at the end of it, he overheard a muffled sigh. He halted and the blood froze in his veins – his legs were perilously tangled up, and he fell with a shriek of horror on the ground. Woe unto him! Before him stood a spook, a real spook, long, emaciated, and billowing, which held a red railroad lantern in its outstretched arms. And from him was emitted a horrible wheezing, thudding, and shrieking ... Pedestrians in the morning found the dear citizen lying unconscious on the bridge (Strašidlo na libeňském mostě, 20 January 1907).

The report continued with a description of further encounters with this alleged apparition that contained ironizing references to the intoxication of those involved, a tale explaining how the light on an approaching train is mistaken for a ghost, and the motif, with ironic effect, of a woman scolding her drunken husband after he returns home from the festivities:

The second case. A man who had enjoyed more than a few drinks went at night from Libeň to Holešovice. At the end of the bridge, just in front him him rose up a terrible phantom, which began to pound him mercilessly. The man flew in mortal terror, with the phantom after him. He runs, breathless, into his home, and the phantom, please, goes in there after him, and it shouted until the neighbors converged on the spot: “I’ll teach you, you rogue, to come back so late from the pub!” (And wicked tongues, of course allege that it was his wife) (Strašidlo na libeňském mostě 20 January 1907).

The article ends with an awkward “rationalizing” explanation for the phenomenon, fabricated by the journalists and featuring the popular motif of the phosphorescent phantom of the period. This (rather untrustworthy) explanation applies the ironic detachment from the entire incident (probably a manifestation of the typical aggressive behavior of a prowling ghost) displayed by middle-class journalists towards a phenomenon that would today be termed a hidden or contextual advertisement (a type of public relations communication that utilizes a contemporary sensation to promote a cultural event).

These nocturnal incidents quickly spread throughout Libeň, striking terror into the hearts of many of its inhabitants. Every living soul gives this bridge a wide berth at night. The mystery of the nighttime spectacle there was finally explained by a thoroughly reliable witness. He is said to have seen a tremendous dog that was running around on the Libeň bridge and giving off a phosphoric glow. This dog, as is well known, had

run away from the Libeň theater after a performance of the detective play “The Hound of the Baskervilles”, where it plays an important role, and it was running around the bridge at night. Because it had been painted with phosphorus, it terrified so many otherwise courageous people. This dog is a magnificent example of the Leonberg breed borrowed from “The World of Animals” and it is possible to see him every Sunday afternoon and evening in the Libeň performance of the “Hound of the Baskervilles” play mentioned above, where he will thrill you with horror with his stage performance. It is only natural that his appearance on the Libeň bridge evoked this hoax of a “phantom of Libeň” (Strašidlo na libeňském mostě, 20 January 1907).

This explanation for the case was then taken up by the even more skeptical *Pražský ilustrovaný kurýr*, which perceived the entire affair purely as a competition between the Holešovice and Libeň workers’ theaters:

Since Monday, Libeň has been steeped in an uncommonly powerful excitement. It has been said that at the Libeň end of the pile bridge a phantom robs nighttime pedestrians of their courage to walk across the bridge. The phantom also engages in other shenanigans which allegedly aim at dissuading the local citizenry from visits to the “Uranie” theater so that they would instead patronize their local one. The most recent reports of the phantom, an illustration of which we provide for you on the basis of eyewitness accounts, indicate that it has already been captured (Strašidlo v Libni 17 January 1907).

Libeňské strašidlo.
(Obraz na dřevě stěně.)

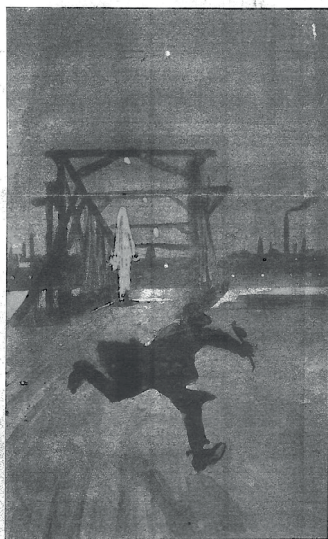


Fig. 4. The phantom of Libeň of 1907, as imagined by an illustrator for *Pražský ilustrovaný kurýr*. Private archive of Petr Janeček.

The phantom of Libeň had a sequel of an exclusively auditory nature reminiscent of its predecessor from Podskalí. Unlike the latter, however, the mystery was explained by the guardians of law and order. Indeed, a memorial to the phantom has even become an exhibit in the Czech Police Museum in Prague:

Besides these silent witnesses against the most serious offenders, the Police Museum also boasts of various other curiosities, such as the “Libeň Phantom”, which rampaged for a fairly long time and aroused fear in the neighborhood of the haunted house. Always after midnight a wooden leg of the “murdered” awakened the sleeping inhabitants of the house and they say the echoing of its steps was horrific. However, the police did not recoil from the mysterious phantom, and in their investigations they discovered that the problem was a strange door knocker that had been deviously placed in the attic. The knocker was confiscated and stored in the museum of crime and the haunted house was relieved of fear and fright (UH 1939).

8. Conclusion

The prowling ghosts of Prague of 1874, 1876 and 1907 were utilized socially as two very different cultural practices. For the working classes, these hauntings were used as vernacular spectacles and improvised festivities linked to pranks, the symbolic occupation of public space, and Czech nationalism. For the middle classes and period newspapers loyal to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, unruly mobs converging on the sites of supposed hauntings were a threat to established social norms and triggered both moral panic and public scorn of the “ghost hunters”. However, this attitude changed very quickly when these events entered popular culture in the form of popular songs and, later, memoirs and literature. Between the Belle Époque of the early 20th century and the First World War, these famous Prague hauntings became the staple for nostalgic longing in the last few decades of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

Like their more famous British parallel, the prowling ghost named Spring-heeled Jack, the Prague phantoms were the product of a distinctive hybridization between the primarily oral vernacular culture of the “traditional” countryside and the gradually-emerging, more sophisticated working-class culture of the metropolis. Distanced from fantastic rural demons and the realistic subject matter of workers’ everyday lives, and standing midway between the folk beliefs of the traditional countryside and the rumors of the modern metropolis, these half-human, half-demonic phantoms of suburbia were a symbolic manifestation of a wide range of social processes associated with urbanization and industrialization. This manifestation in the form of a distinctive urban demonology was soon adopted by new forms of popular culture and became a nationwide literary tradition.

The Podskalí phantom, the Libeň phantom, and other hauntings that appeared with growing frequency on the industrialized outskirts of urban centers in the 19th century and *fin-de-siècle* manifested themselves among a cultural echelon that after the First World War organically embraced the figure of the Spring Man of Prague, a peculiar national manifestation of the originally British urban ghost, Spring-heeled Jack, that became the most famous Czech phantom of the 20th century (Janeček 2020). With the advent of this migratory urban legend, the old pre-First World War ghosts ceased to be active in oral communicative memory and moved towards the more static cultural memory of literature and memoirs.

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Nature Returns: Dolphins and Dinosaurs. On Fake News, Photoshop Urban Legends and Memes during the COVID-19 Lockdown

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ABSTRACT

The article traces a narrative trail of social media posts and fake news in the early months of COVID-19 about how the reduction in pollution caused by the lockdown will allegedly have such a positive effect on the environment that nature will be restored. The study sheds light on this context and observes the change in rhetoric through the cultural matrices of various genres. It discusses whether an image is capable of telling a credible story. If it can, what is the relationship between context, truth and rhetoric and what role does humour play? In this article, however, the texts are accompanied by photographs depicting the events so it is easy to observe how visuality, which in fake news is part of the truth rhetoric, transforms into a vernacular critique of the truth itself. As to the material presented here, a contemporary legend researcher cannot ignore the legend motifs used in the viral visual narratives known as memes.

KEYWORDS

fake news; contemporary legend; rumour; meme; tall tale; social media; parody

EL RETORN DE LA NATURA: DOFINS I DINOSAURES. SOBRE NOTÍCIES FALSES, PHOTOSHOP, LLEGENDES URBANES I MEMS DURANT EL CONFINAMENT PER LA COVID-19

RESUM

L'article traça un rastre narratiu alimentat per publicacions i notícies falses a les xarxes socials durant els primers mesos de la quarantena de la COVID-19 sobre com la reducció de la contaminació causada per la quarantena suposadament tindria un efecte positiu en el medi ambient i la natura es recuperaria. L'estudi aporta llum al context del tema i observa el canvi de la retòrica a través de les matrius culturals de diversos gèneres. La discussió rau en el fet de si una imatge és capaç d'explicar una història creïble. Si aquest és el cas, quina relació hi ha entre context, veritat i retòrica i quin paper hi juga l'humor en tot això? Pel que fa a aquest tema, però, és fàcil observar com la visibilitat, que en les fake news forma part de la retòrica de la veritat, ja que el text va acompanyat d'una fotografia que representa l'esdeveniment, s'ha transformat en la crítica vernacular de la mateixa veritat. Pel que fa al material que es presenta aquí, un investigador de llegenda contemporània no pot ignorar els motius de llegenda utilitzats en les narracions visuals virals conegudes com mems.

PARAULES CLAU

notícies falses; llegenda contemporània; rumor; mem; rondalla d'exageracions; xarxa social; paròdia

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As a folklorist, since the beginning of 2020 I have been fascinated to observe vernacular responses to the global crisis because much of what people communicate about all the aspects of the current global emergency on social media is based on folklore: i.e., beliefs, urban legends, rumours, jokes and narratives. In turn, these are built upon motifs, models and structures that have been of significant cultural relevance in the past. Folklorists throughout the world have collected the material independently and in the framework of joint projects (see Kõiva, Voolaid 2020).¹ A collaboration article by Estonian folklorists provides a fresh review of the folklore in the early months of the pandemic (see Hiimäe, Kalda *et al.* 2020). The following examples of memes were collected during the first months of the pandemic from social media posts by the author's nearly 400 Facebook contacts from the Belief Narrative Network (BNN) and International Society for Contemporary Legend Research (ISCLR). It should be pointed out right from the start, however, that the number and variability of the memes that reflected the pandemic in a positive light was quite small in relation to the overall meme repertoire circulating at the time. It should also be pointed out that most of them originated in English-language social media and spread globally as English-language memes, and only a few were adapted to the local Estonian context.

1. Image and word. Similar phenomena and the cultural forms with which they are described

Memes – shared messages of images and texts – are a symbolic phenomenon characteristic of interpersonal communication during the pandemic period. The participatory culture that operates through memes is often highly intense and universal. While communicating by memes has been growing in popularity on social media for years, the global pandemic, which saw human interaction move largely online, has made it truly rampant. Estonian journalist Esta Tatrik argued in the local daily *Postimees* that, owing to the memes that flooded social media at the start of the latest corona crisis, we were undoubtedly in for one of the wittiest and most entertaining apocalypses ever (Tatrik 2020). Indeed, provisionally, the contemporary meme² formula is arguably the most visible and expressive genre in the social media communication of the participatory culture of the pandemic period. The term largely signifies the transmitting of visual information online, a mix of ideas and images that spread virally. Humour, repetitiveness, dialogicity, simplicity, creativity, artistry, playfulness, imagery, unpredictability and the digital context – all these keywords characterise memes (Shifman 2007, 2011, etc.). Shifman's methodological and theoretical views on the study of memes have been further developed by Bradley Wiggins, who in his latest study focused on

¹ One of the major international projects on this subject is 'Humor during the Global Corona Crisis' with Giseline Kuipers (Leuven Catholic University) and Mark Boukes (University of Amsterdam) as lead partners, bringing together scholars from more than 30 countries, including Estonia. The questionnaire, which was translated into different languages <<https://edu.nl/kp8xe>>, was used to ask respondents to send jokes, including memes shared among internet users. The global corpus is available for all project partners for the purposes of comparative research (Kõiva, Voolaid 2020: 183).

² The term 'meme' was adopted by Richard Dawkins for describing small units of cultural transmission as a parallel to biological genes (Dawkins 1976). Lately, memes have become a part of popular self-expression in online communication.

the intertextuality, semiotics and ideology of memes (Wiggins 2019). Folklorists have also been inspired by Shifman's works, but they have also followed 'their own path' by seeing analogues in earlier folk tales, including contemporary legends, of the material (memes) that appeared on social media. In a sense, these discussions are reminiscent of the discussion on the genre of modern legends and classical legends in the 1980s. These were mostly found to be rediscovered stories that transcend cultural boundaries and largely spread through the mass media, but are not new in form, function or meaning. Rather, they express an adaptation to the modern environment, and they have been closely connected to jokes (*schwank*) and tall tales (cf Klintberg 1990).

Joking is indeed at the forefront in memes, with humour adding a softening and generalising effect to the message (even if it is the message of anxiety and doubt). Most contemporary material circulating in popular form and style serves as a response to some real-life event and a news story describing or interpreting it. Folklore researchers have agreed to approach this kind of material as *newslore*. Vernacular responses can be expressed not only in memes but also in various other genres: songs, movies and other parodies, jokes, urban legends, animated cartoons, digitally modified photos, etc. All this material could be regarded as a kind of news-based vernacular media critique (see Frank 2011: 7, 166 ff.).

These days, memes and their interpretation have captured the interest not only of folklorists but also of social psychologists and researchers into contemporary communication, popular culture and humour. For nearly twenty years now, contemporary legend researchers have been studying material in which seemingly truthful subject matter is initially presented in picture form. Russell Frank (2003) was one of the first authors to write about it. He called these photo-based stories *photographic* or *photoshop urban legends*. The emergence of image material of this sort was greatly influenced by major catastrophes such as the World Trade Centre terrorist attack, Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans, etc. I remember the 2007 conference of the International Society for Contemporary Legend Research in Dublin, at which the American folklorist Diane Goldstein, outside her conference presentation, referred to these seemingly authentic photographs of extraordinary or curious events circulating on the internet as a novel visual narrative genre. At that time, the general agreement at this international panel was that an image tells a story, that an image/photo inherently contains the rhetoric of truth because the photographer has captured a real moment and what is seen with one's own eyes is believable. Also, such visual narratives employ universal motifs known in folktales (i.e., in culture).³ In his article, Russell Frank proposes three main criteria that an image would have to meet to be regarded as an urban legend in the form of a photograph: (1) the image must tell a story; (2) it must be extraordinary, believable, but still false; (3) it must express, at least obliquely, anxiety about threats to our health, safety and psychic equilibrium. In this preliminary article on the topic, Frank points out two "technical" methods that are used to construct a story of this sort. The visual narrative may be created either by using a real (true) photo or a so-called hoax photo (digitally altered photo). To characterise the nature of this phenomenon, Frank proposes a genre

³ The talk and the discussion among all panel participants took place at the end of the conference (author's note).

specification known in earlier narrative tradition of tall-tale jokes and calls it a *tall-tale photograph* (Frank 2003: 120).⁴

As in memes and tall tales, the apparent and difficult-to-control truth gap plays an important role. In the case of memes using photos in digital media, one of the criteria is the creation of veracity through a link with reality.

While truthfulness, which is often ostensible and difficult to verify, plays an important role in legends and fake news, one of the criteria in memes using photos on the digital media is the creation of believability through a bond with reality. Limor Shifman has used photos to study the creative processes that exploit shared and repetitive patterns in memes, and claims that photo-based memes act as a kind of hypersignification mechanism, in which the code itself becomes the focus of attention and functions as prospective photography, and photos are increasingly seen as the raw material for future images. Eventually, by combining these two frames, memes are conceptualised as operative signs—textual categories that are designed as an invitation for (creative) action. While these qualities have been known to appear, in one way or another, in traditional forms of photography too, they have transformed into governing logics in an era characterised by an amalgamation of digital photography and participatory culture (Shifman 2014).

The message that memes convey is not only light and humorous throughout. Many of them can be viewed through the lens of belief and legend research, on the scale of moving (unfixed) truth and reality, which is so characteristic of legends (Bennett 1988: 32–33, etc., Ellis 2018: 400, etc.). The fact that truth falls into different categories depends on how we are able to demonstrate whether they are objectively true or false. This liminal truth scale, with its lack of safe standards, is the very factor that keeps legends and rumours that mediate their content in shorter genres in circulation. However, even debunked urban legends contain elements that are verifiably part of contemporary realities and their changes (Ellis 2018: 401).

One of the most representative examples of the ambivalence (or the sliding truth scale) of a photo-edited meme is ‘Tourist Guy’ (also ‘WTC Guy’ or ‘The Accidental Tourist’). The photo taken from atop the World Trade Centre (WTC) in New York appears to capture a moment before a plane crashes into the tower. The photo was claimed to have been made from a negative from a camera found in the rubble and clearly shows the first plane about to hit the tower. It also shows a happy posing tourist, totally oblivious of the impending tragedy. The photo of the unsuspecting tourist, posing on the observation deck of the twin tower in New York on the morning of September 11, with a plane heading directly toward the tower, depicts an extraordinary situation and initially seemed quite credible, circulating on the internet for a while with this message. The story, however, proved to be a hoax.⁵ The dissemination of the photo is highly reminiscent of the

4 Bill Ellis (2004) has also defined the relationship between legends and humour.

5 Soon a debate followed about the story and web sceptics and analysts revealed that the photo only demonstrates its author’s poor Adobe Photoshop skills, as the image-processing software is for professionals. In the photo, the plane is approaching from the north, so the tower should be the southern tower. There was no observation deck on the southern tower and even if there had been one, it would not have been open before 9:30. However the planes crashed into the towers around 9 o’clock. Experts discovered that the plane on the

viral spread of the 2021 image of Bernie Sanders sitting in the audience of the US presidential inauguration. The only difference was that while Sanders' crouching, slightly absurd-looking figure wearing large mittens was a presence in itself, and therefore easily fitted into any context, the image of the tourist became popular online but retained much of the original idea of him being unsuspecting: he was added to photos where something was about to happen. So the accidental tourist could be found on a beach with a giant wave approaching, in JFK's car before the assassination, a moment before a zeppelin crash and other similar situations.

One of the forms of contemporary media communication that is closely related to the historical matrix of legend or tall tale is fake or false news. A fake news story may serve widely different aims and purposes: it may cause political instability, convey a belief (e.g., conspiracy theory), be sensational, entertaining, etc. Several definitions emphasise that fake news is a misinforming, deliberately false, often unverifiable and sensational journalistic text (Ellis 2018: 401). At this point, a folklorist and legend researcher, however, draws an association with a tall-tale joke, which aims to make fun of the audience. In today's communication, it is very easy for one to become another; for example, an accidentally overheard joke that some believe to be true could be turned into a fake news story out of ignorance (see Kalmre 2013), whereas a photo added to the fake news story serves to confirm the validity of the text through visual perception. In terms of differences, urban legends may perhaps rely more on traditional elements or plots than fake news. Another of the differences (but perhaps also a common feature) is that the creators of fake news are usually consciously lying to their audience, for whatever reason, whereas a narrator of a legend may believe the story or not. However, when a piece of fake news is presented as credible (even when there are doubts about its truthfulness), it enters circulating communication and becomes part of a cultural debate and a form of legendry (Ellis 2018: 402; Mould 2018: 414).

In what follows, I will trace how the narrative theme of nature's recovery during the pandemic was transformed through the genre matrices of folklore and contemporary media described above, the broader context of the material, the adaptation of the popular topic to the local context, the narrative motifs and strategies used to either achieve or parody credibility, and, finally, the significance and purpose of the tiny piece of newslore.

2. Sightings of dolphins in Venice canals: too good to be true

The COVID-19 pandemic, which evolved into a global catastrophe in 2020, was a kind of continuation of the crisis in nature and climate that had been escalating and had intensified in 2019. It involved climate change caused by pollution and global warming, major fires, deforestation, the destruction of nature, the loss of many wildlife species and anomalous animal behaviour. In other words, the issue facing humanity – economic prosperity versus a sustainable natural environment

photo is a Boeing 757, not the Boeing 767 that crashed into the tower. The weather on the morning of September 11 was sunny, which does not explain why the tourist is dressed in warm clothes. The reality, however, was that a Hungarian named Peter had edited a photo of himself to show to his friends and, as is common on the internet, everything travels at lightning speed. The actual photos had been taken on 28 November 1997 (see Frank 2003 and Shifman 2014).

– was already a major global problem before the pandemic broke out. And another extraordinary thing happened – the concern about the future of the world, incited by a Swedish schoolgirl Greta Thunberg, reached many young people who organised climate protests all around the world.

In the first months of the COVID-19 lockdown, I traced a narrative trail in the media and social media, inspired by various news articles, about how the reduction of pollution resulting from lockdown was having a positive effect on the environment. The photo news stories at the end of March 2020 reported the return of swans and dolphins to Venice's canals, previously swarming with tourists but now under COVID-19 lockdown. These reports were even more promising because the international media had for some time been publishing articles about crowds of tourists and the harmful effect of tourism on this historic city. For this reason, which was no secret, I too believed and liked a similar article that had been shared on Facebook. Online news channels broadcast different versions of the story (Kaur 2020, see also *BBC News* 2020; *The Guardian* and many others).

It is psychologically and culturally understandable, and traceable in time, that such dream-like rumours⁶ are rapidly generated and spread. In a critical situation, the general public expects such stories, and in our current internet era, many of them have a motivated, identifiable author. As they did with the origins of the WTC tourist photo, the international media quickly determined the original source of the Venice hoax and debunked it. The story about swans and dolphins had started from a Twitter post. From there it had been picked up by a number of media outlets, spread further and given millions of likes on Facebook, Instagram and Tik Tok. It was also, with genuine sincerity, distributed on Estonian social media (see, e.g., *Naiselikkuse saladused* [Secrets of femininity], etc.). The photos showing clear water, fish, dolphins and swans in the canals of Venice played an immense role in making this fake news item credible.



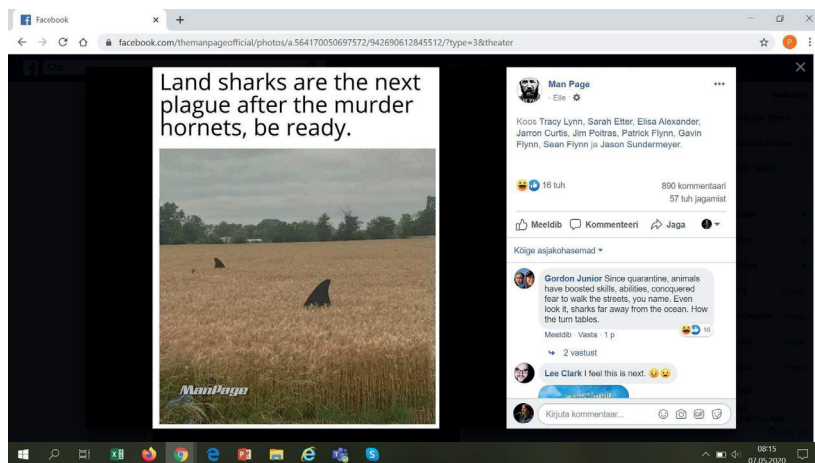
Screenshot.

⁶ Donald Allport and Leo Postman have referred to such anticipated hearsay as dream or foggy rumours (Allport; Postman 1947). One of these rumours, for instance, was about how Stalin's death could have ended the atrocious war.

The video clip used in the post, however, had been made at a port in Sardinia, in the Mediterranean Sea, hundreds of kilometres from Venice. Likewise, the author who compiled the news was not aware that the swans mentioned in the post are by no means unusual in Venice (they are frequently seen in the canals of Burano). It turned out that the original photo that went viral had a highly motivated author, a Kaveri Ganapathy Ahuja from New Delhi, India, who was reported to have enjoyed the attention she received as a result of her March 16 Twitter post⁷ and photo. “The tweet was just about sharing something that brought me joy in these gloomy times,” she said. She never expected media channels to pick it up or it to go viral or cause any harm. (Daly 2020)

3. Vernacular media critique

The news of the water in Venice clearing up and dolphins returning to the canals was debunked in a matter of days by the international digital press and social media. However, before it was debunked, it had gone viral, perhaps largely because of the context of the global pandemic, in which life and communication took place mainly online. Possibly because of the fact that the topic spread so widely and there was such a need for positive news, the following memes parodying the fake news became equally popular, or perhaps even more so. For example, the meme about sharks in a field during the next pandemic, on Facebook’s Man Page, prompted 890 comments and was shared 57,000 times.⁸ Memes about this fake news were also parodied in Estonia.



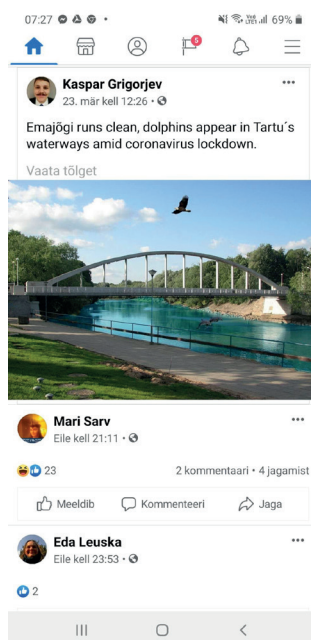
The Man. Land sharks are the next plague murder hornets, be ready.

⁷ Unfortunately, the original post was no longer accessible at the time of writing this article in April 2021.

⁸ The Man Page on Facebook at <<http://facebook.com/themanpageofficial/photos/a.564170050697572/942690612845512/?type=3&?+theater>>

The news was circulated and spread, but was declared false within a few days. Ahuja uploaded her viral post on 16 March and by 20 March the *National Geographic* had already written about it being a deliberate fake (see Daly 2020). On March 23, I retrieved the meme adapted to the Estonian context about dolphins in the Emajõgi River and added it to my collection.

Below, I will discuss some of the more characteristic memes in photo narratives parodying this news piece. While the message of nature returning is prominent in these memes, the local vernacular responses are often set against a background of local symbols and realities. The memes are highly representative because the Emajõgi River and the picturesque Taevaskoda cliffs were expected to recover during the quarantine period. The Emajõgi River had only recently been at risk of pollution from a paper factory on the riverbank, and Taevaskoda, one of the sacred sites in Estonia, was no longer on the route of the riverboat “Lonni” during the coronavirus lockdown. So “dolphins have once again come to mate in Taevaskoda”. This original local adaptation emerged in a special meme group *Põlva meemid* (‘Memes of Põlva’).



Dolphins_river



Dolphins_Taevaskoda

As early as March 24, the Estonian online humour and satire magazine *Abiratas* ('Extra wheel') posted a brief fake news story about dolphins in the Emajõgi River in Tartu. The fake news was adapted to the local context: "the factory closures along the riverbank have made the water so clean that dolphins, who have not been seen here for over a century, have returned..." <<http://abiratas.ee>>.

Other memes interpret the recovery of nature from a somewhat different angle, and show the return of extinct wildlife to the world that has been cleansed by the coronavirus pandemic. For example, while people stay at home and the streets are empty, the once extinct animals – dinosaurs – are returning to Scotland.



Dinosaurs

This theme was strongly supported by (seemingly) realistic photos of wild animals roaming city streets, looking through windows and behaving otherwise unnaturally, which circulated alongside fake news and memes mostly in late March 2020, as if depicting the reality of the early days of the global pandemic. I saved some of these photos in my collection, as it is reasonable to think that while these events were clearly real, the number of photos circulating at the start of the pandemic suggests that many of them are 'fake', as their makers indulged in photo manipulation or faked the context. Some of the animal photos that went viral were quickly debunked by the media as fake (e.g., the photo about drunken elephants in Yunnan Province)⁹ (see also Daly 2020). One of the most popular fake photos in Estonia featured a bear peeking in through a window, wondering where all the people were.

⁹ See <https://twitter.com/Spilling_The_T/status/1240387988682571776?s=20>.



Bear

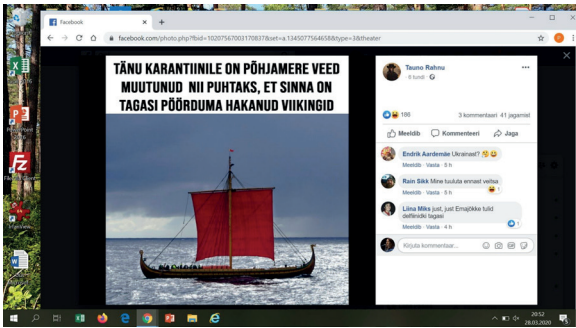
One particular event in Estonia confirmed the importance of the anomalous animal behaviour and seemed to support the general opinion on this matter. On May 14–15, there was an incident in Tallinn involving two bears that had wandered into the city; they were caught, and people were warned about them. The incident caused a lot of excitement and inspired the spread of news articles and also all kinds of folklore: linguistic jokes, memes, etc. Piret Voolaid wrote about the reverberations of the bear saga in Tallinn on social media and the intertextual nature of creating such material: “By modifying existing cultural texts, internet users rely on shared glocal¹⁰ cultural repertoire and textual resources in the collective memory of the community (in our case, Estonians). Both oral lore and master narratives, acquired by mediation of texts read at school, compulsory school repertoire, but also music (song lyrics), art, films, advertisements and mass media, will become the sources of adaptable motifs.” (Voolaid 2020)

In yet another meme category, the subject of the world becoming new and the return of nature is extended with the idea that history will return, too. For example, thanks to the coronavirus quarantine, the North Sea became so clear that the Vikings returned, the forests in Belarus were cleansed and were once again inhabited by partisans, and while dolphins were returning to Italy, Lenin and Stalin were returning to Russia.

¹⁰ “The hybridity of multiple events and the following folkloric reverberations could be observed as a phenomenon called glocalisation. The word glocalisation derived from globalisation and localisation was introduced by American sociologist Roland Robertson in the late 1990s and it stands for the concurrent existence of global and local, social, political and economic phenomena” (Voolaid 2020).



Partisans_back



Vikings



Lenin_Stalin

4. Conclusion

The diachronic evolution of a piece of fake news to a vernacular critique of the same news presented as truth, usually in the form of memes, is a fairly conventional path in contemporary media represented by participatory culture. This phenomenon is typically brief; it emerges and disappears quickly. In fact, the whole process discussed here, from emergence to downfall and disappearance, took perhaps just a couple of weeks.

In terms of fake news, however, visibility is part of the truth rhetoric as the text is accompanied by a photograph depicting the event, thus transforming it into the vernacular critique of the same truth. Diane Goldstein (2018) has argued that the memes here mark a kind of intertextual link with falsity and stupidity. At the same time, like discursive strategies, it is highly typical to borrow prior texts, illustrations and photos to demonstrate this false truth, ignorance, and inadequacy (Goldstein 2018: 474).

As to the material presented here, a researcher of contemporary legend cannot but notice the legend motifs used in the viral visual narratives known as memes. One such belief narrative motif is the existence of extinct animals, Bigfoot or the Loch Ness monster. Another recognisable narrative motif which has also been used as a parody is the belief that heroes (here Lenin, Stalin, partisans and Vikings) are not dead but continue to exist somewhere and reappear in opportune circumstances. While these beliefs are rooted in more archaic folklore, the ideas about the secret existence of extinct beings and animals (dinosaurs, etc.) have probably been reinforced by more recent fantasy literature and films. The motif about heroes being secretly alive somewhere has been influenced by popular culture as well. Yet another contemporary legend-like theme in these memes and fake photos is the main message that they convey: wild animals and birds, such as bears, killer bees/wasps, sharks and dolphins display anomalous behaviour, leave their natural habitat and pose a threat to humans (see also Campion-Vincent 2004, Meder 2007, and others).

Photo-editing of dangerous or, in this context, rare animals and the resulting creation of a new fake photo telling a story about a special or dangerous situation is a creative process in online media communication, similar to that used in older narrative creation and following a repetitive pattern. A good example of this is how a photo of a great white shark, taken by photographer Thomas Peschak more than ten years ago in South Africa, took on a life of its own on the internet. This dangerous sea creature, copy-pasted from Peschak's original photo, has inspired the creation and spread of photo narratives about the shark appearing in flooded cities after a hurricane, or following an unsuspecting man in a small boat, etc. (see Keefe 2018). Sharks (not only the one photographed by Peschak) and alligators or crocodiles often feature in the fake photos spread online and pose a secret threat from the waters in cities flooded by hurricanes (see, e.g., Frank 2003: 126, and elsewhere).

Humour is an integral part of crisis behaviour, and internet users today can share memes and thus participate in the process. Media criticism mediated by such memes also highlights topical issues through the use of humour, in this case the increasing concern for the future of the world, the natural environment and wildlife. Folklorists certainly do not question the wisdom of sharing memes and leave this issue entirely to social scientists, psychologists, media and political researchers. The general understanding is that fake news gives false hope, needs to be controlled and the truth clarified. Mainstream media also try to do this because, for example, a review of online publications after eleven months showed that in some cases the dolphins and swans had been edited out and only the claim about Venice's canals becoming clearer had remained (see, e.g., *The Guardian*).

These fake news stories, or "photoshopped" urban legends or rumours were spread globally but easily "translated" into local contexts. Mixing credible and

fabricated texts, photos, and videos is highly characteristic of the material on the coronavirus pandemic. Like rumours and urban legends, the visual narratives discussed here reflect people's latent dreams about a better, freer, cleaner and safer world. This is one of the lesser known functions of beliefs and urban legends.¹¹

Thus, from a folkloristic point of view, these rumours, which were originally spread as fake news in the form of tall tales (memes) and later in the form of legends with a sliding truth scale, are part of a coping strategy, so-called crisis humour. At the same time, the rumours also functioned as belief tales that conveyed a positive image of the largely apocalyptically perceived pandemic and giving a broader meaning to human existence. Even if the fake news and memes that emerged later lack truth value, they convey the idea of nature recovering and certainly offer hope and a sense of wellbeing.

The social psychologist Erin Vogel has argued that “the need to seek out things that make us feel good may be exacerbated [during the pandemic period] as people try to come to grips with a pandemic, a collapsing economy, and sudden isolation [...] In times when we're all really lonely, it's tempting to hold on to that feeling, especially if we're posting something that gives people a lot of hope,” says Vogel. The idea that animals and nature could actually flourish during this crisis “could help give us a sense of meaning and purpose – that we went through this for a reason.” (Daly, 2020)

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¹¹ In my approach to the urban legend ‘The boy saved by a snake’, I pointed out the aspect of such belief narratives that builds upon miracles and hopes. Anything is possible and everything can change for the better (Kalmre 2018: 35).

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THE NIGERIAN SCAM 2.0

How an improved online scam trick made an unsuspecting Dutch man over 20,000 euros poorer

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ABSTRACT

This paper studies a case of Nigerian scam experienced first-hand by its author. On Tuesday July 10, 2018 I received a friend request on Facebook from someone called Robert Batterman, apparently an elderly London lawyer. I didn't know the man, but I saw that Batterman was also a friend of two of my trusted Dutch Facebook friends at the time, so it seemed fine and I accepted the friend request. Later, I was sent another message via Messenger from this Batterman in Dutch talking about "something important to discuss with you".

A Dutch Facebook friend got a similar message, but this time about "the late Alain Schaap". We both realized that this must be a Nigerian Scam. I decided to find out some more about this British lawyer and posted a warning about this scam on the Internet the next day. Three weeks later I received an e-mail from a Dutch man who told me he saw the warning a little too late. He had already lost a considerable amount of money and was prepared to tell me what happened.

KEYWORDS

Nigerian scam; Facebook; warning; money; Internet

L'ESTAFÀ NIGERIANA 2.0. UN TRUC MILLORAT D'ESTAFÀ EN LÍNIA VA FER QUE UN HOLANDÈS DESPREVINGUT PERDÉS MÉS DE 20.000 EUROS

RESUM

Aquest article estudia un cas d'estafa nigeriana experimentat de primera mà pel seu autor. El dimarts 10 de juliol de 2018 va rebre una sol·licitud d'amistat a Facebook d'algú anomenat Robert Batterman, aparentment un advocat gran de Londres. No coneixia l'home, però va veure que Batterman també era amic de dos dels seus amics de Facebook holandesos de confiança en aquell moment, així que li va semblar bé i va acceptar la sol·licitud d'amistat. Més tard, va rebre un missatge a través de Messenger d'aquest Batterman en neerlandès parlant sobre «alguna cosa important per parlar amb tu».

Un amic holandès de Facebook va rebre un missatge semblant, però ara sobre «el difunt Alain Schaap». Tots dos es van adonar que això devia ser una estafa nigeriana. L'autor va decidir esbrinar més coses sobre aquest advocat britànic i va posar un avís sobre aquesta estafa a Internet l'endemà. Tres setmanes després, va rebre un correu electrònic d'un holandès que li deia que havia vist el seu avís una mica massa tard. Aquest holandès ja havia perdut una quantitat considerable de diners i estava disposat a explicar-li què havia passat.

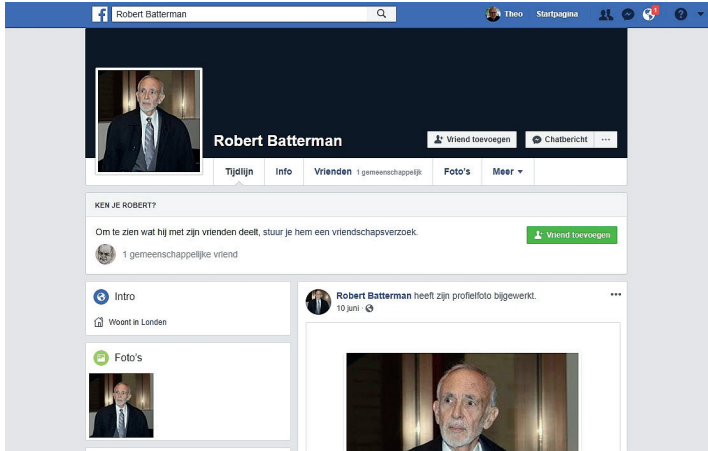
PARAULES CLAU

estafa nigeriana; Facebook; advertència; diners; Internet

REBUT: 4/07/2021 | ACCEPTAT: 26/05/2022

1. The scam, part 1

On Tuesday July 10, 2018 I received a friend request on Facebook from someone called Robert Batterman, apparently an elderly London lawyer.¹ I didn't know the man, but I often get such requests from people who are interested in folktales and storytelling. I don't know whether these people are always able to understand my Dutch messages but I saw that Batterman was also a friend of two of my trusted Facebook friends at the time, so it seemed fine and I accepted the friend request.



A friend request by (fake) Robert Batterman

Somewhat to my surprise I received a message via Messenger from this Batterman in Dutch:

ROBERT BATTERMAN

DI 22:32

Hallo, Theo Meder. Ik ben een advocaat die wijlen Alain Meder vertegenwoordigt. Ik heb iets belangrijks om met je te bespreken. Vriendelijk schrijf me op mijn privé e-mail of sms me terug. mijn e-mailadres is: rbatterman@proskeuerrosellp.com of battermanproskauer@gmail.com en mijn mobiele nummer is: +447452304009

In translation that would be:

ROBERT BATTERMAN

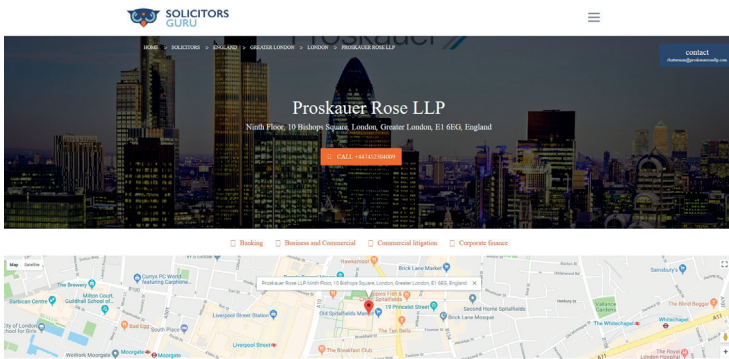
TUE 22:32

Hello, Theo Meder. I am a lawyer who represents the late Alain Meder. I have something important to discuss with you. Kindly write me on my private email or text me back. my e-mail address is: rbatterman@proskeuerrosellp.com or battermanproskauer@gmail.com and my mobile number is: +447452304009

¹ A version of this work was presented on the 38th conference of the International Society for Contemporary Legend Research, July 2, 2021, online organized in Tarragona, Spain. The presentation can be viewed as a video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IF-gIKhhiXbU&t=1s&ab_channel=TheoMeder> [last access July 7, 2021].

Now several alarm bells went off:

- Why does this lawyer write to me in Dutch, when he is clearly not a native speaker of Dutch? The phrase “Vriendelijk schrijf me” is ungrammatical. It is clearly a Google Translate error of the English words “Kindly write me”.
- Why does Batterman write “I have something important to discuss with you” and why does he not say what it is all about? You would expect a lawyer to simply say that it is about a legacy. After all, Alain Meder is late.²
- Who is Alain Meder anyway? I have never heard of him, probably not family. The family name “Meder” is fairly rare, but can still be found in Germany, and the first name “Alain” sounds more French than German. While googling, I ended up finding a Spanish newspaper in which one Alain Meder was accused of abusing women. He wasn’t very late though. A recent search also yielded one or two French Alain Meders, but they too were still alive.
- If a lawyer has something serious to report to me, I expect an official letter at home or at work with a clear explanation. It is highly unusual for a lawyer to approach a client via Facebook and Messenger for an important issue.



The (fake) website of Proskauer Rose LLP in London with (fake) Batterman’s e-mail address

And yet, and yet...

+44 is indeed a telephone number in England and not in the Amsterdam Bijlmer or in Nigeria. The e-mail addresses given suggest a London connection. The London law firm Proskauer Rose LLP seems to have a legitimate website and Batterman’s e-mail address is displayed there. The Solicitors Guru logo links to a legitimate legal site. But anyone with a little skill can easily set up such a web page for a fake law firm. A search on the internet revealed that there is actually a law firm in London called Proskauer Rose LLP, but the address is 110 Bishopsgate not 10 Bishopsgate Square, which is mentioned on the Batterman webpage.

If you subsequently search the internet for a lawyer called Batterman, you will also find one. Only, his actual name is L. Robert Batterman, and he works for Proskauer Rose LLP in New York. When we compare photos, it appears that the “British Robert Batterman” of Facebook has stolen his photos and identity from the American L. Robert (Bob) Batterman in New York.

² Legacies of dead millionaires form a rather common narrative in Nigerian Scams (Schaffer 2012: 167).

The American Bob Batterman is known as a “management-side labour attorney”. In short, he represents the interests of companies in labour disputes.

Let’s take a closer look at the email addresses and the web address that our Facebook Batterman provided:

- battermanproskauer@gmail.com → which professional lawyer from a law firm allows clients to write to a general gmail address? Anyone can request a gmail address under the name battermanproskauer.
- rbatterman@proskeuerrosellp.com → this is much more like a business email address of a law firm, but, on closer inspection, it also raises our suspicions. After all, it doesn’t say proskauer rose llp. It says with an almost invisible (but intentional) spelling mistake proskeuer. It is obvious that the real address of proskauer was not available.
- the web address of the so-called London law firm contains the same (intentional) spelling mistake: <<http://proskeuerrosellp.com/solicitors.guru/office/5706-proskauer-rose-llp/index.html>>

It seems that a scammer has created these e-mail addresses, bought a web address and set up a website that can hardly be distinguished from the real thing. The scammer uses an existing law firm and an existing lawyer as a cover, hoping that this will trap an unsuspecting user.

I decided that evening, and after further investigation the following day, not to respond to the Messenger message from Mr. Batterman.

That same day I decided to ask one of my Facebook friends, journalist Wijbrand Schaap, if he had also received such a vague Messenger message from a British lawyer. I suspected this was a scam. Mr. Schaap’s response confirmed my suspicions: “Great. I also received such a message and thought it was suspicious. Today I wanted to do the same as you, namely ask around. I’ll block him.”

Did Wijbrand Schaap also receive a message about an alleged deceased family member such as Alain Meder?: “With me it was Alain Schaap. In the meantime, I have reported him to Facebook and blocked him.”

The following provisional conclusions were drawn:

- There is a man, probably in the UK, who poses as a London lawyer called Robert Batterman,³ but who is not him. (This guess turned out to be wrong: he is more likely to be a Brit living in Spain).
- He stole part of his identity from L. Robert Batterman, the American lawyer.
- He has also created a British Proskauer Rose LLP webpage, which seems deceptively real, but which again contains his fake Proskeuer email address. The web address also has the characteristic “spelling error”.
- He has created a Facebook page and sends friend requests.
- If you accept, you will receive a Messenger message shortly afterwards about “a late Alain [enter your own last name here]”.
- What will most likely follow is an upgrade of the well-known “Nigerian Scam”: your deceased family member has left a tremendous amount of money. You are the only surviving relative to be traced. However, something vague like a ‘clearance fee’ is needed to get the money free. If you pay it, you will then be transferred a huge amount of money.

³ This (fictional) status turns him into a reliable and trustworthy authority, see Schaffer (2012: 165) and Cukier e.a. (2007: 5-6, 8). Preferably, scammers chose reliable titles, trustworthy companies/institutions and comforting western names.

- Only after you have paid or passed on all your bank details do things quieten down and your bank balance will be several thousand euros lighter. The ‘Nigerian’ Scammer silently thanks you for your donation.

This scam is much more ingenious than the obvious emails full of language errors from the Nigerian Scam 1.0 period.⁴ The biggest difference is that the victims are played: no identical emails are sent to a large number of random people. They are all approached personally with a message that contains personal details. Secondly, a new social medium is chosen: Facebook and Messenger, instead of email. Thirdly, much has been done to make it all seem real and trustworthy: the British barrister, the office, the email addresses, the telephone number and the website. Finally: the spelling mistakes are kept to a minimum, partly thanks to Google Translate, whose translations have improved considerably. The scammer has put a lot of extra work into it, and perhaps this new method brings in more victims.

Considering it to be part of my work, the following day, July 11, 2018, I wrote a warning about the “Batterman” scam that I posted on my website, urging everyone not to respond to such messages on Messenger, certainly not when they come from a brand new ‘friend’: <<http://www.theomeder.nl/NigerianScam20.pdf>>

I also felt obliged to send the real American lawyer Robert Batterman an e-mail about his stolen identity and he responded the same day from his iPhone: “Thank you. It is a fraud. We are working with the authorities.”

A year later, most traces have been deleted. The fake Proskauer website has been taken down. The fake Robert Batterman can still be found on Facebook, but the account is completely empty now.

This completes the story of *The Scam, Part 1*, but there is – unfortunately – a *Part 2*.

2. The scam, part 2

Three weeks after I received a Messenger message from fake-Batterman, on Saturday, August 4, 2018, I got a Messenger message from Mr. De Waard (72),⁵ who can be described as a most friendly elderly internet user, mildly naive, accommodating and gullible. He also accepted a friend request from Batterman on Saturday, July 7, and then received a message from this “lawyer” about the “late Alain Waard”. Mr. De Waard was innocent, smelled no trouble and sent an email back in good faith. Mr. De Waard was shown a huge legacy, more than enough for a carefree old age. In a few days, however, he was duped out of more than 22,000 euros. His daughter-in-law, a young woman with extensive internet experience, understood that her father-in-law had been scammed and filed a report with him on 8 August 2018 at the local police station. In the meantime, Mr. De Waard had searched the internet for more information about Batterman, and – unfortunately too late – had found my warning about the fraud practice. Hoping that it could help in some way, Mr. De Waard gave me all the details. Here is a brief reconstruction of what happened step by step.

⁴ See Schaffer (2012: 169-170).

⁵ I know Mr. De Waard’s full name and address, but I am trying to protect his true identity.

Saturday, July 7: Friendship request on Facebook from fake-Batterman accepted. Through the chat, Batterman announces that he is the lawyer who represents the interests of “late Alain Waard” and that something important must be discussed. Mr. De Waard sends an email to Batterman saying that he is awaiting further instructions.

Because of the chat message, Mr. De Waard should have been extra careful, because the scammer does not know how Dutch family names work. Strictly speaking, people with the family names “De Waard” (The Landlord) and “Waard” (Landlord) do not have to be family at all. Apparently, the scammer thinks that “De” is a middle name, such as “John” and therefore part of the first name. In later messages and documents, the scammer will correct his mistake.

Sunday, July 8: Mr. De Waard receives a long, official-looking email from Batterman in Dutch. A few translation errors by Google Translate betray an English original of the text.

Robert Batterman (Bar.)
Proskauer Rose LLP
Ninth Floor, Bishops Square, London,
Greater London E1 6EG England.
Official email: rbatterman@proskeuerosellp.com
Private e-mail: battermanproskauer@gmail.com
Telephone number: +447452304009
Website: www.proskeuerosellp.com

Dear [...] de Waard,

First of all, I want to ask you for your confidence in this transaction; this is strictly confidential. I know that such transactions can make everyone anxious and worried, but I assure you that ultimately everything will go well. You will certainly be surprised to receive this letter because we have never met.⁶ My name is Robert L Batterman (Barr), lawyer of the late estate agent Alain Waard, who was the victim of the train accident on July 24, 2013 at Santiago de Compostela.

Read article;

<https://www.theguardian.com/world/santiago-de-compostela-train-crash>
<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/picturegalleries/worldnews/10201214/Spain-train-crash-many-dead-as-train-derails-near-Santiago-de-Compostela.html>

⁶ Schaffer found this kind of apology in 23.3% of her letters: “I know this proposal letter may come as a surprise to you considering the fact that we have not had any formal acquaintance before” (2012: 168). Kich gives an example too: “My proposal to you will be very surprising as we have not had any contact before” (2005: 138).

My intention in contacting you is your participation in securing the funds that my deceased customer deposited in a Spanish bank for an amount of 34,700,000 euros before his sudden passing. The bank has urged me as his legal attorney to find the beneficiary of the said fortune, because he did not name one. He died with his only daughter. Because he did not know that this would happen, he could not pass on his will.

The bank has since urged me to contact a successor before the money becomes the property of the state. Despite every effort to find someone who is related to the deceased, my search has been unsuccessful.

For this reason, I have contacted you because you have the same last name as my deceased client. I am actually asking you for your permission to nominate you to the bank as the successor of my deceased client's money, since you have the same last name, so the amount can be paid to you.

I will legally collect and obtain all documents required to secure the bank's money. All I need is a secure collaboration to make this transaction possible. I would suggest that 10% of the money is donated to aid organizations, while the remaining 90% is distributed equally.⁷ You do not have to worry because this transaction is 100% risk-free. I will use my position as a lawyer for the deceased to successfully complete this transaction.

Call or text me at: +447452304009 or just send me an email at battermanproskauer@gmail.com or rbatterman@proskeuerrosellp.com

The planned transaction will be executed under an authorized order, which will help to protect it. If you find this offer morally unacceptable, I apologize and please forget all about it.

If you want to reach me for this purpose, you can contact me for more information.

Send all answers only via my private e-mail: battermanproskauer@gmail.com or rbatterman@proskeuerrosellp.com

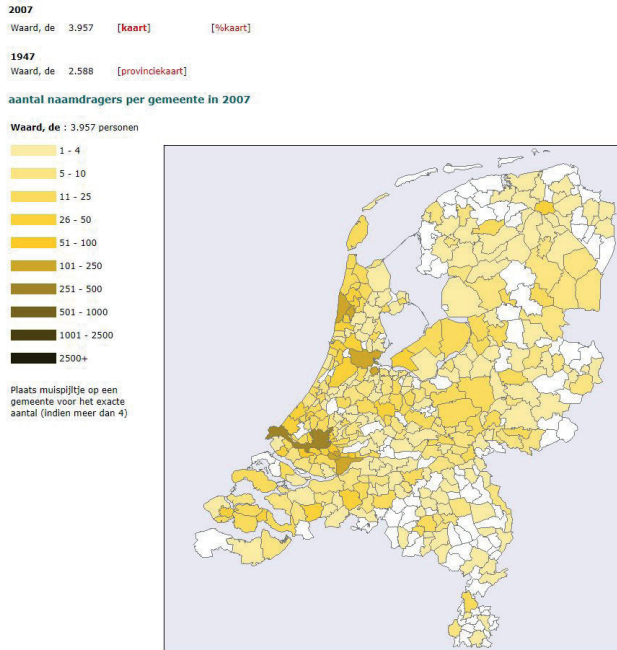
Best wishes,

Robert Batterman (Bar.)

The rhetorical trick that Batterman uses is that he constantly emphasizes that he can be trusted and that De Waard does not have to worry. However, De Waard must always use the e-mail addresses mentioned – of course he is not allowed to e-mail the real Proskauer office in London, because nobody knows a British Batterman there, so if he does the deception will be revealed. Batterman makes the death of the wealthy real estate agent Alain Waard and his daughter plausible by sending links to a real major train accident in Santiago de Compostela in 2013,

⁷ This detail can be found in other Nigerian scam letters too, but never in inheritance scams; it is a blind motif here and never mentioned again in further communications, see Kich (2005: 135, 138) and Dyrud (2005: 6).

where many victims were killed.⁸ Nowhere in the articles is the name of Alain Waard mentioned. However, Batterman also sends a forged death certificate from Alain de Waard. If a wealthy real estate agent called Alain (de) Waard exists, then he should be found on Google. However, the result is: 0 hits.



The Family Name Database of the Meertens Instituut shows that in 2007 there were almost 4000 people with the name “de Waard” living in the Netherlands

Great suspicion should also be aroused by the following statement: the lawyer apparently searched for an heir for 5 years, and finally found someone in the Netherlands with the name (De) Waard. The Dutch Family Name Database of the Meertens Institute shows that in 2007 there were no fewer than 3957 people in the Netherlands with the surname De Waard. That is potentially almost 4000 heirs, so it is a little naive to think that only one heir has come out of the investigation. But undoubtedly all suspicion will fade away if the next juicy tidbit is presented: an inheritance of 34,700,000 euros! The amount of money was deposited with the Grupo Cooperativo Cajamar by Mr. Alain de Waard in 2012, and the scammer sends a deceptive real proof of this. As is customary in a first scam mail narrative, nowhere is it mentioned that the victim should pay (fees, taxes) in advance (Schaffer 2012: 167).

Tuesday, July 10: Batterman asks Mr. De Waard to send a copy of his passport, which De Waard does promptly. De Waard also receives a Capital Release Form that he had to fill in and return to Señor Antoneli Ramos of the Grupo

⁸ In Nigerian scams the death of rich people is more often backed up with links to natural disasters, wars or plane crashes (Cukier e.a. 2007: 7-8; Dyrud 2005: 6).

Cooperativo Cajamar.⁹ Batterman says that the amount of 34,700,000 euros must be transferred first to a Spanish platinum account for large amounts. With the opening of that platinum account and the transfer, an amount of 6,400 euros in costs is involved, which De Waard needs to pay for. Batterman sends him an official-looking document in which he tells the Spanish bank manager that the heir has been found and that the amount can be transferred soon. In the days to come, De Waard is repeatedly told that he must keep the entire transaction secret (or the Spanish state may claim the funds). For obvious reasons, he is told not to engage his own lawyer: a Dutch lawyer would quickly see through the fraud.¹⁰ Batterman takes every opportunity to repeat that De Waard does not have to worry, and that everything is 100% in order.¹¹

This is where the victim falls into the trap: with a sum of millions in prospect, 6,400 euros is a small investment. Anyone familiar with the Nigerian Scam (or 419 scam, referring to the fraud section of the Nigerian penal code)¹² understands that the victim will pay a few times and can forget about the legacy. Mr. De Waard's daughter-in-law only heard about the scam afterwards and literally said: "If you had told me this in advance, this would never have happened."

Friday, July 13: Mr. De Waard receives an official-looking document full of stamps and signatures from the Spanish Ministerio de Justicia, confirming that he is the only heir to the 34,700,000 euros of Alain de Waard. And a certificate full of stamps and signatures follows in which Batterman declares under oath that he will execute the money fairly.

Tuesday, July 17: Now Mr. De Waard actually transfers the amount of 6,400 euros to a Spanish bank account number in the name of Luinaza S.L., according to the internet a machine wholesaler in Valencia.

Wednesday July 18 and Thursday July 19: Mr. De Waard is informed by the Grupo Cooperativo Cajamar in Madrid that he has to pay an amount of 8,600 euros, so that the legacy of the Spanish platinum account can be transferred to his Dutch account. That same day he transferred 8,600 euros in an emergency payment¹³ to a Spanish bank account number in the name of Gilmans 305 S.L., according to the internet, a textile wholesaler in Valencia. The same day, De Waard receives a receipt from the Banco de España that the amount has been paid.

Monday, July 23: Mr. De Waard is informed by the Agencia Tributaria in Madrid that he must pay tax on his inheritance. It is officially an amount of more than 8 million, but it is conceivable that the amount will be reduced to just over 4 million. If the tax is paid through a bank in Hong Kong, it will only be 1 million euros.

Thursday, July 26: an e-mail from Batterman makes it clear once again that taxes have to be paid on the million-euro legacy. This must be done in advance; it

9 Filling in forms with all kinds of personal and financial information is a standard feature of the Nigerian scam (Schaffer 2012: 160).

10 See Schaffer (2012: 160, 168).

11 Yet another common feature of the scam narrative (Schaffer 2012: 169).

12 See Cukier e.a. (2007: 2), Dyrud (2005: 1) and Kich (2005: 129).

13 Payments are always "urgent" so the victim has little time to think things over (Schaffer 2012: 160).

cannot be paid afterwards. Batterman claims that he had not taken this possibility into account (however, the set-up is clear: the idea is to collect more money without ever paying out the fictitious legacy). According to Batterman, the total amount is 1,522,833 euros, to be paid in three instalments of 507,611 euros (the amounts do not exactly match the Spanish message of three days before). For the payment of the first instalment, Batterman can advance something. He has just sold a house for 500,000 euros, and wants to advance this if it can be settled later if De Waard has his legacy. That day, De Waard transfers 7,611 euros to a Spanish bank account number in the name of Reparaciones y Distribuciones Global – according to the internet a machine repair company in... Valencia.

All of these companies in Valencia have been registered as commercial businesses,¹⁴ but none of them show up on Google Maps or Google Street View: at these addresses there are just houses and apartments.

Wednesday, August 8: deadline for the payment of the second instalment. Actually, full instalments need to be paid to three different Polish bank accounts in Wrocław, Warsaw and Białystok. However, in all cases the beneficiary has an account at the electronic money institute Paysera in Lithuania.

Mr. De Waard's bank account is practically exhausted and he is unable to pay the next two instalments of more than 500 thousand euros. He is supposedly called by the Spanish bank to ask him if the money is coming, but Mr. De Waard recognizes the voice of scammer Batterman, whom he has spoken to on the phone several times in the meantime. The man speaks perfect British English without any Spanish accent. Mr. De Waard says he does not have the money and lies that he is busy taking out a loan. That same day Mr. De Waard and his daughter-in-law report the scams to the police. In total he was scammed out of 22,611 euros.¹⁵ The archetypal fairy tale and legend plots of the lucky hero getting a reward, retrieving the hidden treasure, obtaining the winning lottery ticket, finding the pot of gold, going from rags to riches, is shattered (Cukier e.a. 2007). A malicious British scammer residing in Spain with shadowy businesses in Valencia has become more than 22,000 euros richer in one month. A scam such as this is quite lucrative even if only one victim kicks in every month.¹⁶

Wednesday, August 29, 2018: Mr. De Waard's local bank, the Dutch Rabobank, sends him an official letter with a warning. In the previous month, transactions have taken place for which Mr De Waard has already been warned several times and which the bank calls "Advanced Fee Fraud" or "Nigerian fraud". The following agreements were made in an earlier meeting with the bank:

- He must report the scam to the police.
- He must deliver a copy of the report to the bank.

¹⁴ Only in the case of Gilman's 305 is the name of an 'owner' mentioned: Ahmed Soliman El Assal. His name is registered for 4 small companies that have hardly any budget, and none of them advertise on internet.

¹⁵ Payments mostly involve fees, taxes and unexpected bribes (Schaffer 2012: 160). Smith (2009) claims that every year billions of dollars are lost due to these scams – an average of about 3000 to 5000 dollars per victim, see Cukier e.a. (2007: 8). Dyrud confirms this, but also gives examples of much greater financial losses (2005: 5). See also Kich (2005: 131-132).

¹⁶ A 1-5% response suffices for a scam to be a success; see Cukier e.a. (2007: 2) and Dyrud (2005: 5). Kich adds: "The susceptible victim is likely to be desperate, greedy, or good-hearted to the point of being almost wilfully naive." (2005: 131).

- He must block the scammer's e-mail address.
- He must not mention anything about this issue to anyone.
- He must not undertake any similar transactions from his account from now on.
- The bank will continue to monitor his account for the next 6 months.

Saturday, September 29, 2018: despite the fact that Mr. De Waard has broken off all contact on the advice of family and the bank, fake-Batterman makes a final attempt to re-establish contact in an English-language e-mail:¹⁷

Hello [...] de Waard,

I hope you are doing great.

It's been a while i heard from you, even when i try to call you on the telephone you no longer take my calls or respond to my text messages which i deem so appropriate considering the tax waiver issue we have to solve.

We have been able to pay only the first phase of the three way tax waiver.

It's two months or more we have not communicated the bank and i think we have to do so to avoid all our efforts so far be a waste.

I want to know if you have been able to get any reasonable amount so that we can put together with the one i have for the second phase of the tax waiver.

I know that things are very difficult everywhere but we must not give up in acheiving this great success.

Let us keep trying our possible best to ensure the completion of this transaction.

Let me know the amount you have now so that it will be added to the amount i have been able to raise to make up a reasonable amount and begin the payment of the second phase of the tax waiver.

We must not wait to raise all the money at once. Our delay might make the bank feel we are unserious which may lead to the confiscation of the fund.

I hope you understand our need to try as much as we can to start paying for the second phase of the tax waiver.

I await your prompt response.

Kind regards.

Mr. De Waard did not respond. He is mainly surprised by his own naivety. In an email to me on October 29, 2018, he literally says, "How could I let myself be cheated like this?"

¹⁷ Schaffer notes that in 93.3% of the scam mails that she studied, formal or even pompous English phrases were used to impress the victim and convince the recipient of the scammer's reliable professional skills (2012: 170-171).

However, an offer of an astonishing legacy of more than 34 million can make your mind stand still.¹⁸ The Nigerian scam 2.0 has a personal focus (becoming *friends* first, followed by the story of a distant, deceased and rich *family member*), it uses *social media*, has been worked out in great *detail* and apparently seems to be guaranteed on all sides with websites and official-looking documents full of stamps and signatures from all sorts of organizations (Schaffer 2012: 160; Cukier e.a. 2007: 2; Dyrud 2005: 4-5). With a computer and some creativity, however, this can all be counterfeit.

In general, the scam still contains the seven basic elements of the classic Nigerian scam, as summed up by Martin Kich: "(1) the introduction of the sender; (2) the explanation of how the recipient was selected to receive the letter; (3) the description of the supposed financial conundrum facing the sender; (4) the proposed resolution of that difficulty; (5) the explanation of the recipient's role in that resolution; (6) the supposed payoff that convinces the susceptible recipient to participate in the scheme; and (7) the establishment of conditions that make the recipient less likely to question the scammer's subsequent tactics and demands." (Kich 2005: 134.)

Even though it was not just a classical bulk-mail full of language errors (Schaffer 2012: 162; Kich 2005: 137), alarm bells should have sounded several times:

- a real lawyer sends official paper letters about inheritances
- a request to keep things secret is always suspicious¹⁹
- a wealthy real estate agent Alain (de) Waard never existed, according to Google: check the facts
- one De Waard can never be the only heir if almost 4000 of them live in the Netherlands
- payments to (Madrid) banks should not go through companies (in Valencia)
- if your own bank warns you of Nigerian fraud, you better trust it
- pay first to receive more later, is never a reliable deal

Despite possible technical solutions for detecting and defusing these scams, the best strategy to fight them for now is to keep educating internet users (Schaffer 2012: 174-175). The bottom line is still: if things look too good to be true, they are (Schaffer 2012: 175).²⁰

Needless to say, Mr De Waard never got his money back.

¹⁸ Schaffer assumes this promise of extreme wealth is the main reason why people keep falling for these scams (2012: 173).

¹⁹ Fake-Batterman's mails carry some classic linguistic features of a Nigerian scam, like the frequent recurring of words like "secret" and "urgent", as well as persuasive strategies like apologies and flattery, and appeals to trust, desire and greed. See Schaffer (2012), Cukier e.a. (2007: 5-8), Dyrud (2005: 7). On the other hand, because fake Batterman is acting like a barrister, he keeps his messages formal and business-like – appeals to the victims' emotions, empathy or spirituality are lacking. See Dyrud (2005: 6) about religious appeals.

²⁰ See Smith (2009) and Cukier e.a. (2007: 4) on this subject.

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‘Localised’ and ‘unlocated’ contemporary legends and their function on the Greek internet

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ABSTRACT

Contemporary legends tend to function as a way of sustaining prevailing manners and dominant social norms. Thus, they are situated near the time and place of the narrative action. By connecting to a given known place – that is, by being localised – they promote a sense of plausibility.

Nevertheless, amongst the legends found on Greek internet, few link the narrated event to a specific location. Most of the known legends are transmitted with no spatial and temporal reference at all. Having lost the connection to specific places, they become, therefore, ‘unlocated’. In fact, most of the acknowledged contemporary legends circulating on the Greek web are usually depicted as terrifying incidents that happen to random people at unspecified times and locations.

What does the loss of locality entail for the function of the genre if it was one of the key elements that turned modern legends into possible and plausible stories? Tales? How do they seem to function online? Do localised stories still exist? And if they do, does locality enhance the function they already have or does it eventually lose its impact?

KEYWORDS

contemporary legends; locality; Greek internet; digital folklore; scary stories

LLEGENDES CONTEMPORÀNIES ADAPTADES CULTURALMENT I INTERNACIONALITZADES I LA SEVA FUNCIO EN LA INTERNET DE GRÈCIA

RESUM

Se sap que les llegendes contemporànies solen funcionar com a mitjà per sostenir les maneres imperants i les normes socials dominants. Així, se situen a prop del moment i el lloc de l'acció narrativa. En connectar-se a un lloc conegut determinat, és a dir, localitzar-se, promouen una sensació de plausibilitat.

No obstant això, entre les llegendes que es troben a la Internet grega, poques històries relacionen l'esdeveniment narrat amb un lloc concret. La majoria de les llegendes conegudes es transmeten sense cap referència espacial i temporal. Després d'haver perdut la connexió amb llocs concrets, esdevenen, per tant, «no localitzades». De fet, la majoria de les llegendes contemporànies reconegudes que circulen a la xarxa grega solen ser representades com a incidents terrorífics que succeeixen a persones aleatòries en moments i llocs no especificats.

Què suposa la pèrdua de la localitat per a la funció del gènere si va ser un dels elements clau que va convertir les llegendes modernes en històries possibles i versemblants? Contes? Com sembla que funcionen en línia? Encara existeixen històries localitzades? I si ho fan, la localitat millora la funció que ja tenen o finalment perd el seu impacte?

PARAULES CLAU

llegendes contemporànies; localitat; Internet grega; folklore digital; històries de por

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1. The meaning of space and place. Why locality is important for the function of contemporary legends.

Traditional and contemporary legends are linked to reality in an attempt to create a plausible reconstruction of it. To make this link to reality, they make specific references to historical figures or locations that are, to some extent, verifiable. In order to function as a means of disciplining cultural groups, as defined by Dundes (1980: 6), legends describe situations that are perceived as important, experienced, or even potentially possible at some point in the lives of both narrators and listeners (Smith 1997: 492). In this way, the receivers of the message can connect to it, identify with the central characters in the story and their suffering, which is perceived as a warning about their own actions.¹ To make this function possible, the narrated event is delimited to the location and time of its transmission, creating the conditions of appropriation by the group in which it circulates (Pettitt 1996: 7-14). Hence, the narrated event is nearly always related to a specific location that is recognized or known to the group, regardless of what the narrated event is about. Thus, the main features that have been attributed to the genre, based on its definition and the theoretical discussion that has arisen, are the “where” and “when” of the reported events: that is, the space and time of the narrative (Pettitt 1995: 96). In this paper we are going to focus on the location of the contemporary legends under consideration. We will try to highlight their locality and the ways in which it tends to be adjusted to the function of the genre on the internet.

Space is not a natural phenomenon; rather it is a man-made concept which strongly reflects the social context in which it is created.² In brief, experience is what transforms space into location.³ Hence, people’s actions are ‘registered’ in the space and define the place. Therefore, the aspect of place⁴ in the genre of contemporary legends must reflect the anxieties of modern people and provide information on present cultural conditions. After all, legends “have always lived in and grown out of living context” (Gunnell 2008: 14). That is, by incorporating familiar features, the story of the legend becomes acceptably plausible. Therefore, the warning conveyed by this legend – that if something happened once, it could happen again – is more easily accepted by the group members if the story alludes to an incident that happened within the group’s social sphere. Eventually, as Gunnell (2008: 14) mentions, legends “are one of the features that turn ‘spaces’ into ‘places’”: that is, they have an effect on the way in which the environment they are told in is understood by the tellers and listeners that inhabit it. Of course,

1 Of course, they were also being transmitted as a way of having fun in specific situations (for example, around the camp fire), but their main function according to scholars was political (Ellis, 2001: 64, see also Fine & Turner 2001: 17).

2 The concept of space is of great importance in Estonian folkloristics, where ‘place-lore’, a new concept that emerged in the 1990s, soon became a distinct field of study (Valk & Sävborg 2018: 9). On the concept of socially constructed space, place and landscape, see Giddens (1990), Hirsch (1995: 1-30), Lefebvre (1991), Augé (2009 [1992]), Hirsch & O’Hanlon (ed.) (1995), Basso (1996: 53– 90), Tilley & Cameron-Daum (2017). On the relationship between landscapes and legend, see Simpson (2008: 25-38), Gunnell (ed.) (2008).

3 On the relationship between space and place, see de Certeau (1984: 117).

4 On this topic and in relation to other genres of folk narrative, see Nicolaisen (1980: 14-18), Tucker (1980: 19-25).

there are several types of places. They can be familiar, homely or unknown, mysterious, or even dangerous. Places can become lived experiences and, as such, they can evoke different feelings (Valk & Sävborg 2018: 11).

Do the modern Greek legends that have been discovered and collected online maintain this idea of place and location, though? The genre has been recognized by Greek folklore studies rather recently (since 2005) and has received little attention from Greek scholars.⁵ This has created a big gap in folk narrative genre research, because there are no records of the contemporary legend's spread through the years in Greece. But first, we must describe the research area before responding to this query.

2. Digital folklore: Internet as a folkloric field

Due to globalization and the speedy development of technology, particularly in the area of communication technologies, the modern world is characterized by the rapid and widespread dissemination of information. As a result, technology, and particularly the modern internet, has emerged as a promising field for the development of folklore and popular culture. Dégh (1994) argues that folk culture is a dynamic historical process that constantly re-examines the contemporary manifestation of traditional genres such as fairy tales and legends (e.g., in television commercials); thus, absorbed by technological innovations, they remain active. Folk culture evolves, adapts and incorporates new data from each era. Internet can be considered as a tool that facilitates the spread of folk and popular culture not only more widely – even globally – but also more quickly (Blank 2009: 9). The environment of technology in general, as well as the internet, seemed a promising field for the spread of contemporary legends, too (Blank 2007: 15-26).

Still, which part of internet's chaotic space are we going to examine? We have found and gathered the modern legends studied here on the 'localised'⁶ internet, in this case the 'Greek internet'⁷. Nonetheless, on account of the globalized nature of the field and globalization per se, cultural items frequently cease to contain only the characteristics of a local tradition and instead follow the new path of a multimodal spread that is now global, due to increased mobility across national borders (Brednich 2001:7). This is also one of the first aspects discussed in this paper.

⁵ See Benekos (2006: 159-170) and Kouzas (2017: 363-381).

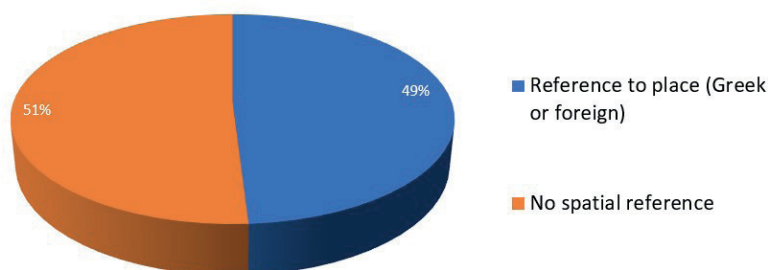
⁶ See McNeill (2009: 85-97), Gordon & de Souza e Silva (2011).

⁷ See Kakampoura & Nounanaki (2022: 46-78).

3. Contemporary legends on the Greek internet

As a result of our searches for contemporary legends on the Greek internet,⁸ we found several stories that were similar in morphology, theme and content stories (for example, ghost stories, personal experience narratives and creepypastas). This study concentrates on those stories in the indexes collected by folklorists worldwide so that, in the absence of local guidelines, they can somehow tame the material and begin to make a collection of Greek contemporary legends. Using as our main guides the international bibliography and the respective motif indexes (Brunvand 1981, 1984, 2012, Smith 1983, 1986, Bennett & Smith [eds.] 2007 and many others), we attempted to locate similar narratives on the Greek internet. Additionally, to take into account the features attributed to the internet, we determined the ‘Greekness’ (locality) of the legends not in terms of spatial or temporal reference, but in terms of language. Several of the contemporary legends we have considered to be Greek explicitly mention their connection to foreign places but, even so, we regard them as Greek because this is the language they were actively disseminated in. One such example is *The Woman with the Torn Mouth*, in which the event depicted is located in a foreign country⁹ (Japan). We shall discuss this in detail below.

Space references in Greek contemporary legends



⁸ This paper discusses the legends collected from the long-term web research that has been carried out for the doctoral thesis of A. Nounanaki (2022), in the Department of Primary Education, National and Kapodistrian University of Athens under the supervision of Associate Professor R. Kakampoura. They were collected between 2013 and 2018 from the “surface web” and the most popular social media (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram). From the “surface web”, articles about contemporary legends were collected and analysed from 103 websites, 59 open blogs and 12 open fora. Videos were also collected from 27 YouTube channels. In the social media accounts examined, 78 Facebook pages and groups, and 14 Instagram profiles were located, but no results found on Twitter.

⁹ This legend is about a samurai’s cheating wife. Her husband punished her by tearing her mouth from ear to ear with his katana sword and cursing her never to die. She is still wandering in the world asking for acknowledgment of her beauty from passers-by and killing those who do not find her attractive after she has shown them her horrific scar. See “The Slit-Mouthed Woman” in Brunvand (2012: 345-347).

It is a given that contemporary legends have fluid morphological features when transmitted orally. Nevertheless, in their digital dissemination, the way they are transmitted through “copying and pasting” is crucial because it seems to limit the creation of variations. Only a few different versions of the stories are found in those collected from the Greek web; most of the stories are reposted by copying and pasting. Therefore, this catalogue contains 102 stories that appear in the same words every time. The primary factor that distinguishes the stories is their locality. Some of them (49%, see below) specifically allude to a given space – Greek or foreign – while others, even narratives with the same fundamental motif, were found to have no reference to any space at all (52%). This lack of reference to a place is one of the central features of the contemporary legends collected from the internet.

The internationally known contemporary legends found on the Greek internet are ‘The Vanishing Hitchhiker’ with four localised variants (which are ‘The Apparition of the Penteli Mountain’,¹⁰ ‘The Soldier and the Girl’,¹¹ ‘Maria’¹² and ‘The Girl’¹³), ‘The Boyfriend’s Death’ with three variants (one local version the ‘Ravisher of Sheikh Sou Park’,¹⁴ one located in a foreign place – France –¹⁵, and one with no

10 The Penteli Mountain is one of the mountains around the city of Athens. Although the city has grown to such an extent that it now almost reaches these mountains, until the 90s they were considered to be so remote, there was no reason to drive through them. This might have been the reason why the story of a ghostly apparition has been set there. Legend has it that in the early 60s after breaking up with her fiancé, a girl committed suicide by jumping from the mountain of Penteli. She is said to wander around the mountain after 8 p.m. looking for her partner. She is described by locals who live in the more remote places, as well as drivers who were just passing by, as a tall woman with long blonde hair and a lovely [or gentle or sweet] face. They also claim that they have seen her stop passing cars and ask the drivers to take her to her fiancé. Drivers who are willing to give her a lift do not have to drive her for long as just a few meters further on, she asks to be dropped off and says that this is the place she was killed. Alternatively, she asks to be dropped off and then simply vanishes from the vehicle.

11 A young soldier on duty on a Greek island lends his jacket to the local girl he is dating. He goes to her home to pick it up, only to find out that the girl is long dead and he finds his jacket on her grave.

12 Two young men were on their way to a festival in a village. As they were walking, they met a very beautiful girl, Maria. She asked them where they were going and decided to go with them. On the way back, Maria was cold and one of the young men gave her his raincoat. They took her to her house and Maria told them to return the next day to get the jacket back. The next morning the young man went to the girl’s house and an old woman in black clothes opened the door. The young man asked to see Maria, but she told him that her daughter Maria had been dead for years. Together they went to the cemetery and the woman showed the young man Maria’s grave. On it there was the young man’s coat.

13 Same story with the soldier and the girl, only this time it involves a journalist meeting a girl in a bar after he has covered an event in a small village. The girl leaves her jacket in the car, the journalist tries to return it to her the next day and finds out that she has been dead for years. There are no details about who these people are or where the story took place.

14 This was the only serial killer who ever existed in Greece. He lived in the 1960s in Thessaloniki and was killing girls in the Sheikh Sou park. A story has been added to the real events, which is the contemporary legend known as the ‘the boyfriend’s death’.

What is interesting in all these variants is that the story loses its connection to the location.

15 In Paris in the 1960s, a young couple drove into the woods so that no one could see them. At some point the boy got out of the car. He was taking such a long time that the girl went

spatio-temporal specification bearing the title ‘The Noose’¹⁶, ‘The Roommates’¹⁷, ‘The Licking Hand’, which is known with the title ‘Not Only Dogs Lick’¹⁸, ‘The Kidney Heist’¹⁹, ‘The Choking Doberman’²⁰ and several more.

Some of these legends take the same form as ones that are more internationally known,²¹ while others are more oikotypical,²² and can be considered to be local variations. The “Last Smoke” or “The Train Journey”²³ are two examples. This

out to look for him, but she was frightened by a shadow in the wilderness. She quickly got back into the car and tried to leave. She heard strange squeaks from the roof. The car could not move because someone had tied it with a rope to a nearby tree. Getting out to see why the car was not moving, the girl realized that her boyfriend was hanging from the tree.

16 It is the same story, only there is no specification about the location: A young couple drove into the woods so that no one could see them. At one point the boy got out. He was taking such a long time that, the girl got out to look for him, but saw the shadow of a man and ran back quickly. After a while, she heard a sound and the girl decided to leave, but she could not because someone had tied the car to a tree with a rope. She tried again and then heard a scream. The girl got out of the car and saw her boyfriend hanging from the tree over the car.

17 Two girls, students, are sharing an apartment in the city (Athens or Thessaloniki). One night one of them goes out while her roommate stays home. When she returns, she enters her roommate’s room in the dark to get something she needs. She goes back in again the next day, and finds her friend stabbed to death and a note: “Aren’t you glad you didn’t turn on the light?”

18 A girl is comforted by her dog licking her hand, because she is at home alone. She hears a weird sound only to find that it was caused by the dripping blood of her dog, who has just been killed. See “The Licked Hand” in Brunvand (2012: 375-376).

19 One night a boy was having a drink in a bar and met a very beautiful girl. After chatting for a while, they decided to leave and continue their evening at his house. When they got there, the girl asked him for a drink. The boy had one too. From that point on, he remembered nothing. All he remembered was waking up in a bathtub full of ice, while next to him was a telephone and a note: “Call immediately for an ambulance. We removed one of your kidneys!” This guy survived and is still alive, although he really does have a kidney missing.

20 Two friends challenged a third to spend a whole night in the cemetery alone and he had to stick a knife in a grave as evidence. The third friend accepted. The next day they found him dead next to the grave! It turned out that he inadvertently pierced his coat with his knife and died of shock, believing that the dead man had been resurrected. See Brunvand (“The Graveyard Wager”, 2012: 274-275).

21 One such example is the contemporary legend ‘The hairy-armed hitchhiker’ (see Brunvand, 2012: 285-287), whose Greek title is ‘The grandma-grandpa’: A woman went to the parking lot where she had left her car. There was an old woman waiting for her and asked where she was going. The young woman answered that she was heading to Kifissia (an area in Athens). The older lady said she was heading to the same place and asked if she could give her a lift. On the way the young woman was surprised to see the old woman’s hand was as hairy as a man’s. The frightened woman intentionally ran into the back of the car in front of her and quickly got out to call the police. By the time the police arrived, the old woman had gone. While searching the car, the police officers found a bag on the back seat that belonged to the ‘grandma’ and inside was a kitchen knife and a rope.

22 See Hasan-Rokem (2016: 110-137).

23 This contemporary legend is about a couple traveling by train. The boy left the cabin for a beside an open window. The girl stayed inside the cabin, but she soon noticed that her boyfriend had been gone far too long and got up to look for him. The sight of her boyfriend made her scream. He had put his head out of the window to smoke, but a train going in the opposite direction knocked it off and his body hung there headless.

story falls into the broader category of 'Decapitated Riders and Drivers' (Brunvand 2012: 170-171),²⁴ which includes the motif of decapitation in a series of events.

Nevertheless even 'locality' has "degrees". This means that some stories are connected to very specific parts of the country, such as 'Davelis' Cave',²⁵ 'The house at 13 Gidogiannou Street',²⁶ and so on, while some refer more generally to the country, such as 'Female Students' ('Roommates') who live somewhere either in Athens or in Thessaloniki,²⁷ 'God Samaritan',²⁸ or the oicotype 'Black-Clad Woman of Evros',²⁹ but are still connected on some level to the given space of Greece. Some stories are connected to specific foreign places too: 'Alligators in

24 Brunvand (2012: 171) links this urban legend to the effort of parents to warn their children about the dangers of traveling by car (or other means of public transport).

25 This is an actual cave in one of the mountains surrounding the city of Athens, where this very famous thief used to hole up in the late 19th century. Legend has it that somewhere in this cave, his treasure is still buried. In fact, it is said to be beneath the nearby small church and that the cross on top serves as a lever that would reveal a hatch and lead to the hidden treasure.

26 This story is about a deserted house in Amfissa, a small city in central Greece. According to the legend, it all started during the Second World War, when the house belonged to a very wealthy local man who had had an illicit affair with one of his maids. An unwanted pregnancy led to a heinous crime that was to stigmatize the house once and for all. Fearing the general outcry of the small community, the rich owner led the young pregnant woman to one of the basements of the house, where he hung her! Ever since the girl had been haunting the house.

27 This is a very general reference because these are the largest cities in the country and thousands of young people flock there to study, since they housed the largest percentage of university departments at least until 2000, when there was a considerable decentralization and schools were set up in different parts of the country.

28 Of course, not all contemporary legends are about the gloomy side of life; many also refer to funny or surprising incidents (Smith 1986: 15). The following is such an example: You stop on the street to help someone whose tire has burst and after a week you are sent a check for 100,000 euros. The man you helped was Latsis – a very wealthy local person – and he was paying you back.

29 This is a legend about a demonic figure appearing in a military camp in the area of Evros. Evros is the northwest border of Greece, where many such camps guard the borders of the country and make an immediate defence possible. So, this report is again very broad and general, but it is still connected, on some level, to reality.

New York’s Sewers’,³⁰ ‘The Mothman’,³¹ and ‘Black Volga’³² from the USSR. Others have more arbitrary connections: ‘The Boyfriend’s Death’, set in France and ‘The Choaking Doberman’,³³ in Australia. In these, the location is neither explicitly stated in the narrative nor supported by any compelling evidence.

The vast majority of the stories being shared on the Greek internet, however, lack any spatio-temporal information. Despite those mentioned above, there is a long list of legends that are not connected to any familiar person, space or time and are, thus, transmitted as something that once happened somewhere to someone. Examples of this type of legend are ‘Check the Back Seat’³⁴ and ‘Bloody Mary’.³⁵

30 The classic story about the alligator-filled sewers of New York. People used to flush their alligator pets down the toilets because they wanted to get rid of them. They survived, though, grew and lived under the city. See Brunvand (2012: 15-16).

31 This legend is attributed online in the following way: If you’ve seen the movie “The Mothman Prophecy” you, probably, know this strange creature that is said to have appeared in the small town of Point Pleasant. The mystery began in 1966, when two couples driving around the town, near a complex of large warehouses, noticed two large red circles in the shadows of the buildings, like eyes watching their car. The fame of the flying creature soon spread throughout the city. Every night cars would go to the spot to see the creature they had already named Mothman. Many reported seeing or encountering it, while visits by men in black and the unexplained mutilation of animals increased. The city had been plunged into mass hysteria and everything stopped when in 1967 the bridge connecting the city collapsed for no apparent reason and 46 people were killed. At times residents claim to see the flying shadow and to receive strange phone calls from voices speaking in an incomprehensible language. The investigation is still ongoing.

The connection of contemporary legends to movies will be examined shortly.

32 See Czubala (1991:1-3). A black car of the once legendary brand “patrolled” the streets of Warsaw in the 1960s with the grim goal of kidnapping children. According to the legend, the passengers in the car were senior Soviet officials. In the many versions of the story, children were used as sex slaves for the ruling Soviet class, as providers of human organs or even blood for the rich who suffered from leukaemia. Nothing has ever been proven, of course, but the legend lives on and reigns in Poland.

33 This legend has its origin in Sydney. One night a couple returned home and found their dog choking. The woman immediately took the dog to the vet. After a while the vet called and told them to leave their house immediately. Unaware of what had happened, the frightened couple left, and met a policeman looking for them. The policeman informed the couple that the dog had been choking on a finger and that the burglar must still be inside the house! Indeed, the thief was found unconscious in their bedroom.

34 A woman driving on a deserted country road at night was almost out of gas. She stopped at an open gas station, gave her credit card to the clerk to pay, but he told her there was a problem with it. She suspected he was lying, went inside the store and saw him locking the door. Terrified, she hit him and escaped. The clerk ran after her, but she had already left. So, he shouted: “Someone is hiding in the back seat!”.

See “The Killer in the Backseat” in Brunvand (2012: 358-361).

35 This legend is attributed online in the following way: According to this legend, if someone stands in front of a mirror in a dark room and shouts “Bloody Mary” 12 times, starting at midnight, the scary face of a girl will appear in the window. It is the spirit of a girl, who was born with a deformed face and was accidentally killed when a stupid joke went wrong. (Many variations say that the spirit attacks, or even kills, the person who has called her).

4. Interpreting how locality emerges in online contemporary legends

Locality and its absence lead us to slippery speculation. We assume that those narratives that are connected to a place in Greece could have been actively disseminated at some point in the ‘offline world’. However, we cannot assume that a narrative – e.g., ‘welcome to the world of AIDS’³⁶ – has never been transferred as an actual event somewhere in Greece too. Still the only form in which this legend is found online is the following:

Online rumours about AIDS-infected pins being left in public places like cash registers, theatre chairs, or buses have been going around since 1995. In fact, in 2000 there was another sick story about contaminated syringes being placed under the handles of gas pumps and even writing on them: “Now you have Aids”.

This example may indicate that there were no previous major collections. But still, some of the stories, at least on the Greek internet, are not being transferred to familiar places, probably because they do not contain a familiar or recognizable framework. Two such examples are the case of ‘The Choking Doberman’ and ‘The Old Man’³⁷ since they are set in houses. Even in rural areas (such as villages), apartment buildings have been the predominant form of housing in Greece since the 1960s. Since houses are primarily occupied by upper-class individuals who can afford the higher maintenance costs, it is difficult for the general Greek population to relate to the main characters in these stories.³⁸ The “Old Man” story also implies the existence of a front yard, which in the locals’ collective fantasy is connected to the “American dream”, rather than the Greek domestic way of life. Another example, ‘The Babysitter’, mentions an ‘employee’ for the children’s care, who is usually young and whose services are requested only when needed. In Greece, ‘nannies’ appeared only rather recently or, if they existed in the past, they were quite limited because the ‘task’ of both the nanny and the babysitter was almost unquestionably assigned to the grandparents. So, rather than being

³⁶ See Henken (2002: 259-276), (2010: 7-11).

³⁷ On a snowy night, a girl was sitting alone in the living room of her house watching TV, behind which there was a large window. At one point she saw an old man staring at her from the window. She panicked and called the police, but when they arrived, they found no one there, not even footmarks in the snow. The girl invited the policemen inside to thank them. Then they discovered the truth. There were footprints behind the couch! All the time the old man had been behind her, behind the couch, and she was seeing his reflection in the window.

³⁸ Although nowadays some people do have houses, they could not possibly be so big that a stranger could live in them without the owners noticing, as happens in the legend “The Clown Statue”: A girl babysitting for a couple calls them to ask if she can remove the clown statue, the one they had in the living room, because it scared her. The parents told her to hide the children and call the police because they did not have a statue and the children had been complaining that a clown was watching them while they slept. Eventually, it turned out, the “statue” was a homeless dwarf, disguised as a clown, and having nowhere to stay, entered the house, which was so large that he could easily avoid “unwanted encounters”. When the police caught him, they found that he had been staying at this house for two weeks. The moment the babysitter entered the living room, in order not to be noticed, he pretended to be a statue.

believable situations, these stories were more easily seen as horror movie themes³⁹ because they do not relate to the local way of life.

Because of their ability to terrify users, who enjoy being scared,⁴⁰ contemporary legends consequently become part of horrifying online entertainment, similar to horror movies, which integrates a variety of stories. With reference to cinematic horror that works as a means of entertainment, Pinedo (1996: 17-31) claims that viewers enjoy horror movies because they know that what they see on the screen is not real and, therefore, cannot harm them. Elias (2008: 150-173) also points out that what people seek in their mimetic leisure activities is not to be released from tension, but actually to be subject to a certain kind of tension, a form of enthusiasm that is often associated with terror, sadness and other emotions they seek to avoid in their daily life.⁴¹ People seem to look for this kind of entertainment on the internet as well, where it can be found in the form of short multimedia-narratives that also incorporate contemporary legends. This idea is supported by the way that movie scenes are often chosen to ‘portray’ these legends online, as a good story often becomes more popular when accompanied by audiovisual material (Blank & McNeill 2018: 11). Sometimes, this material is taken from films such as *Urban Legend* (1998) (figure 1), or others that have a similar theme as the legend: for instance, “The Clown Statue”, which is usually accompanied by the clown⁴² from the movie *It* (1990) by Steven King (figure 2). These depictions disconnect the story from a known place and a familiar victim and connect it instead to popular cinema and horror movies.



Screenshot from the movie *Urban Legend* (1998) which is identified with the theme of the urban legend “check the back seats” <<http://news247.gr/eidiseis/psixagogia/humor/deite-toys-15-pio-gnwstous-astikous-muthoys.3493900.html>>

39 See e.g., the on-screen transfer of the legend “The Babysitter and The Man Upstairs”, as depicted in the movie ‘Urban Legend’ (1998), the movie ‘Fright’ (1971), the first film to use the horror trope of an isolated babysitter who gets stalked by a madman, ‘When A Stranger Calls’ (1979), or even ‘Halloween’ (1978), ‘Babysitter’s Nightmare’ (2018) and many others.

40 On the satisfaction of getting scared, see Twitchell (1985), Hills (2005) and Hanich (2010). The aesthetic paradox of turning horror into a form of entertainment was even touched on by Alfred Hitchcock in his 1949 article “Can Fear Be Pleasurable?” (Hanich 2011: 3).

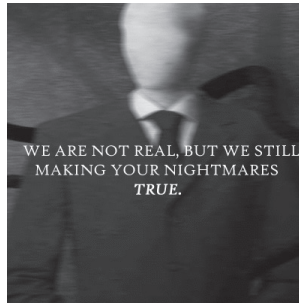
41 On ‘cinematic horror’, see George (1982:159-79), Freeland (1995: 126-142).

42 For this ‘cinematic’ clown, see Cantor (2004: 283-304).



The movie clown who accompanies the urban legend “The clown statue”
<https://www.svouranews.gr/2013_09_27_archive.html>

Of course, when the stories are told orally, the narrator entertains the audience by deliberately trying to cause a particular feeling.⁴³ In the context of the internet, contemporary legends, are being transmitted along with other stories that function similarly (for example, dream narratives, “personal metaphysical experiences”, metaphysical creature sightings, ghost stories),⁴⁴ in the same way and for the same reason. The stories offer a way of dealing with suppressed emotions that are not dealt with in everyday life, even though most users are aware they are not true.



Gif referring to this kind of scary online entertainment.
<<https://giphy.com/gifs/horror-creepy-black-zBabq1LYlexVe>> [last retrieval 15/3/2022]

Thus, the narratives' online function demonstrates that their social role is weakening. Disconnected from any “true” social function generally attributed to contemporary legends which is enhanced by locality, these online narratives emphasise the satisfying feeling of terror they cause, confirmed by users who comment on stories (figure 4) and by the way they are retransmitted (mainly through the copy-paste function).

⁴³ These stories have been described by various terms, such as fabulates. They are essentially narratives developed and standardized by the narrator's desire to tell an entertaining story (Ellis 1997: 275).

⁴⁴ See De Vos (1996), (2012).



«Μου σηκώθηκε η τρίχα 🤔🤔🤔🤔🤔»

«Γιατί αποφάσισα να δω αυτό το βίντεο την ώρα που είμαι μόνη μου στο σπίτι
αααααα 🤔🤔🤔🤔»

«Ένα μεγάλο χειροκρότημα στους gloomy που κατάφεραν να με κάνουν να μην κοιμηθώ
σήμερα»

«I got goosebumps», <<https://cutt.ly/Nv4mioq>>, “Why did I decide to watch this video while being alone at home aaaaaa 🤔🤔🤔🤔», «A big round of applause for Gloomy who managed to make me not sleep today» <<https://cutt.ly/mv4mwLD>>

Users still find ways to reinterpret the stories, even though some of them are definitely reposts of the unchanged images or texts. These stories consequently ‘survive’ because they are constantly shared, users leave comments on their ‘effectiveness’, and they are constantly reinterpreted (Blank & McNeil 2018: 6).

Still, to serve as a fun fright, they do not seem to need to be located in a specific and familiar place. The connection to a specific place is even less necessary thanks to the internet, as even the “local internet” is designed for a diverse group of users who, despite having similar cultural traits, live in a rather large offline area. This means that the perception of the familiar is transformed into a subjective concept.

Even though electronic “meta-language” is used to embellish the rendering of the stories as “instant” transcriptions of oral ones, the narration tends to be textually and morphologically consolidated. In other words, these legends have acquired a consolidated body, a fixed narrative with a specific sequence of motifs. There are only a few distinct versions and no variations. Having said all that, there is an inevitable question: are these online stories still legends? This question comes up each time a new aspect of the genre is discussed. However, it is important to keep in mind that contemporary legends do not have just one meaning or function, but different ones both for all the people that get involved with them. This is because they are presented in different contexts. In other words, any narrative can be perceived or promoted as simultaneously conveying information, entertainment, and/or several messages. Additionally, these legends are constantly transmitted and constantly renegotiate matters of truth and believability,⁴⁵ even if they are presented as lies, hoxes, jokes, or, in this case, creepypastas and scary stories. This is because they tend to contain a defining truth about the familiar aspects of everyday life (Smith 1997: 494). The textual characteristics of the narration, its subject matter, the ease with which it can become a fun activity and its ability to transform to other narrative genres is the reason why it resembles other narrative forms (i.e., rumors, gossip, conspiracy theories). This aspect relates also to the narrator’s belief in the subject of the story (Smith 1997: 494; Clarke 2008). Eventually, the point is not always to return to the question of what a legend is, but rather to turn our interest to how a legend is constantly reinvented.⁴⁶

⁴⁵ See Dégh (2020: 55-68).

⁴⁶ The very motto of ISCLR, as written in the magazine ‘Contemporary Legend. New Series’, seems to seek to sidestep this question and to promote fruitful dialogue about the active functioning of the genre in the groups in which it is spread. See Smith (1991: 1-3).

5. Conclusions

To summarise the above, Greek contemporary legends are considered to be all those stories that circulate on the internet in the Greek language, regardless of whether they refer to places in Greece or not. Some of them seem to have been connected, at some point, with places familiar to their audience, but most of them are ‘de-framed’ narratives that reinforce the distinction between stories as stories and stories as evidence for belief. Every localised version becomes local because they are connected with familiar places or concepts. They attach to familiar conditions and experiences of the group that can be linked to either the main character of the story or the situation, so that no one can doubt their connection. Legends that became popular because they were scary do not have this kind of connection. Those told “for laughs” may resemble folktales more than legends (Bennett 1988: 13-36) because they are presented as scary stories that allegedly happened sometime to somebody so the audience does not feel connected to them and just enjoy the story. Thus, they provide the user with the thrill of being scared, just as horror movies do. This means that there is less need to maintain those features that make the legend plausible. Since locality does not seem to be a precondition to let someone have fun, these legends become ‘unlocated’.

In short, contemporary legends serve a particular purpose in the digital age. Along with other stories, multimedia posts and visualized media with a similar impact appear to be primarily intended to give internet users a “fun” fright. Of course, the attribution of believability in such stories is also found, but they are mostly considered to be scary stories to have fun with. Therefore, it seems that Greek internet users regard modern legends as “horror stories” (or creepypasta), which clearly provide terrifying entertainment. The fears they used to mirror have turned into just a frame of dread. Hence, these stories are no longer perceived as true experiences or as a way of disciplining people in modern social norms. As a result, they are no longer being located in familiar surroundings, since locality does not add to their purpose anymore. Still, this altering of function should be considered an evolution not a decline. These kinds of legend, as well as folk narratives in general, are alive: they draw on tradition, but evolve by adapting to the modern urban environment, and changing forms and functions through dissemination on media such as the internet.

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Politics, folklore and humour: the case of Sant Esteve de les Roures

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ABSTRACT

After the referendum on the self-determination of Catalonia held on 1 October 2017, the Guardia Civil sent the Supreme Court a report listing acts of alleged violence against police forces that had been sent to Catalonia to stop the referendum from being held. According to the report, the most violent events took place in the village of Sant Esteve de les Roures, a non-existent town. From that moment on, Sant Esteve de les Roures came to life online, as profiles were created for all the services and institutions of the town of 750,000 inhabitants, presided over by its mayor, Josep Orni. The aim of this paper is to trace the general public's spontaneous creation of Sant Esteve de les Roures, a town invented by the Guardia Civil, as an illustration of creativity and an example of a community overcoming a political crisis through humour.

KEYWORDS

Humour; politics; folklore; internet; Sant Esteve de les Roures

POLÍTICA, FOLKLORE I HUMOR: EL CAS DE SANT ESTEVE DE LES ROURES

RESUM

Després de la celebració del referèndum d'autodeterminació de Catalunya de l'1 d'octubre de 2017, la Guàrdia Civil va enviar al Tribunal Suprem un informe amb la relació d'actes de suposada violència contra els cossos policials que s'havien enviat a Catalunya per evitar-ne la celebració. Segons aquest informe, l'escenari dels episodis més violents havia estat el poble de Sant Esteve de les Roures, una població inexistent. A

partir d'aquell moment i de manera vertiginosa, Sant Esteve de les Roures va cobrar vida a Internet, amb la creació de perfils que mostraven tots els serveis i les entitats d'aquest poble de 750.000 habitants presidit per l'alcalde Josep Orni. El propòsit d'aquest article és resseguir la creació espontània i popular d'aquest poble inventat per la Guàrdia Civil com a exemple de creativitat i gestió d'una crisi política mitjançant l'humor.

PARAULES CLAU

humor; política; folklore; Internet; Sant Esteve de les Roures

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1. The origin of Sant Esteve de les Roures

On 1 October 2017, the Government of Catalonia held a referendum to gauge public support for the self-determination of Catalonia (the date would come to be known as 1-O)¹. The referendum was organised following an election in which supporters of the referendum gained the majority of seats in Catalan Parliament. The Government of Spain opposed the referendum on the basis of the country's laws and constitution at the time. Although Spain's Constitutional Court called for the suspension of the referendum, the Government of Catalonia continued efforts to organise the vote in accordance with the Law for the Referendum on the Self-Determination of Catalonia passed on 6 September 2017. More than two million people voted in the referendum, despite numerous acts of violence on the part of state security forces in an attempt to prevent the referendum from taking place, which caused multiple injuries and hundreds of bruises.² After the referendum had been held and Catalan parliamentary elections had been concluded on 21 December 2017, the Guardia Civil³ sent Supreme Court Judge Pablo Llarena a report detailing 315 acts of alleged violence or aggression against the Spanish police forces sent to Catalonia, when what happened was precisely the opposite. The report was made available to the newspaper *El Mundo*.

The investigators produced an extensive report, to which *El Mundo* was given access. It detailed an extensive list of "acts of aggression and damage to property, as well as serious resistance and intimidation" and highlighted the "inaction" of the Mossos d'Esquadra during these events (Urreiztieta & Escrivà 2018).⁴

The Madrid-based newspaper reported that the most violent events occurred in Sant Esteve de les Roures, a non-existent municipality in Catalonia.

Some of the most violent events took place in Sant Esteve de les Roures, where "one of the demonstrators, who had already attacked other agents, took advantage of a fallen and completely defenceless agent and brutally kicked him in the back of the head". Also, in Sant Esteve de les Roures, the driver of a motorbike tried to run over a policeman and steal his official weapon (Urreiztieta & Escrivà 2018).

The news spread almost instantly, and from that moment on, profiles of organisations and residents of this new town based on the erroneous police report started appearing on Twitter. The name of the new town stems from the similarly named Sant Esteve Sesrovires, a real municipality in the Baix Llobregat region. The fact that a non-existent town appeared in an official Guardia Civil report prompted numerous jokes and the creation of profiles on Twitter parodying

1 This article is part of Grant PGC 2018-093993-B-I00 funded by MCIN/AEI/10.13039/501100011033 and by "ERDF A way of making Europe", and is part of the work of the Research Group GRILC (Grup de Recerca Identitats en la Literatura Catalana) of Rovira i Virgili University, recognized by the Government of Catalonia (2017 SGR 599). A preliminary version of this work can be found in Samper (2021).

2 See Samper & Oriol (2021) on the self-determination referendum and the rumours it created prior to the referendum.

3 The Guardia Civil is the Spanish police force responsible for civil policing under the authority of both the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Defence.

4 The Mossos d'Esquadra are the official police force of the Autonomous Region of Catalonia.

administrations, political parties and other organisations in the municipality, such as the town council, a university, the Guardia Civil itself, all kinds of citizens' associations and even some businesses. In April 2018, a little less than a month after the publication of the news, the fictitious town already had nearly 3,000 organisations on Twitter.

One particular event marked the turning point in the impact and growth of the fictional town. On 14 April 2018, the official profile of the Guardia Civil on Twitter responded to the profile of the Sant Esteve de les Roures Town Council, reproaching it for its lack of impartiality in a tweet in which it shared a video of a news item from the television channel La Sexta in which Guardia Civil officers were seen allegedly firing rubber bullets at immigrants.⁵



Twitter conversation between the Sant Esteve de les Roures Town Council profile and the official Guardia Civil profile.

This conversation legitimised the online presence of Sant Esteve de les Roures, obviously not the intent the Guardia Civil. The online presence then began to grow exponentially, partly as a humorous public reaction to the repeated errors of the Guardia Civil, but also as a kind of humour therapy for the events of the self-determination referendum of 1 October, in which the Spanish police forces sent to Catalonia sought to stop the referendum by force. According to journalist Antoni Piqué:

Sant Esteve de les Roures can also be seen as a social barometer – in the sense of a “social network” — for Catalan sovereignty, which has found itself in a rather sour mood since 1-O, at least on social networks. This contrasts sharply with the irony and general derision of the independentists prior to the referendum, when everyone generally made light of everything (Piqué 2018).

⁵ Because the account of the Sant Esteve de les Roures Town Council has been blocked, only the Guardia Civil's response is still available at this time <<https://twitter.com/guardiacivil/status/985101793175785472?s=20>> [date viewed: June 2022].

Another perspective views Sant Esteve de les Roures as an alternative to Tabarnia, the proposed new autonomous community including Tarragona and Barcelona, to prevent these areas from becoming republican in the event of a hypothetical declaration of independence by Catalonia.⁶ According to technology journalist Albert Cuesta:

In any case, the Roures phenomenon represents a much-needed reinstatement of humour in these days the country is going through and can be interpreted as a reaction to the unionist proposal of another much more artificial imaginary territory, Tabarnia. Indeed, it is hard to believe that all this inventiveness is entirely spontaneous, especially given the graphic quality of some of Sant Esteve's profiles. But analysis of more than 200 profiles revealed no clear pattern, only that nearly half of them were created on Wednesday the 18th (Cuesta 2018).

So, there's nothing to suggest — or at least it's not yet been proven — that the creation of all the profiles and the virtual community were based on some preformulated plan. And unlike Tabarnia, no public figure has taken a position at the helm of this community; actually, almost all of the Twitter profiles have remained anonymous to this day. In fact, as Blank points out, the internet specifically facilitates the formation of communities that share concerns or fears, or, in this case, a form of advocacy behind the curtain of humour:

The Internet has become a hybridized and ritualized space that hosts the symbolic contexts of participants within its virtual walls. By tapping into folkloric forms with analog precedents (including earlier technological devices), the Internet provides familiarity and accessibility to limitless information. No one has to be left in the dark. In the context of a tragedy or contentious event, the online venue serves as a symbolic place for collective rejuvenation while serving the intrinsic desires of the individual. Conversation and connectivity with others affirm that we are in fact alive and well, even if we feel wounded inside. Accordingly, folkloric expression on the Internet helps people to establish a common ground with others and reassure themselves that they will not be alone to face an unknown future by themselves (Blank 2013: 103).

6 Although this proposal gained momentum after the elections of 21 December 2017, in which pro-independence supporters were victorious, but with the political party *Ciudadanos* the leading force in Tarragona and Barcelona, the idea is older and can be traced back to 2011.

2. Sant Esteve de les Roures, a look at the town

The creation of Sant Esteve de les Roures was not a phenomenon that occurred exclusively on Twitter. In relatively little time, a Wikipedia-like open-content encyclopaedia was also created, devoted entirely to the town.⁷ The wiki provided complete information about the municipality,⁸ including, in November 2019, its population, mayor, and even its motto, as though it were a real place.

State: Catalonia

Region: Rouredà

County: Llerena Alta

Population: 750,000 inhabitants (approx.)

Borders Samarruga de la Punta, Vilassar d’Urgell and Sant Fruitós de la Segarra

Mayor: Hon. Mr Orni

Motto: We’re not made of wood; we’re made of iron!



Shield of Sant Esteve de les Roures in the wiki created for the town.



Map of Catalonia showing the region of Rouredà on the Sant Esteve de les Roures wiki.

⁷ Other encyclopaedias of this type have been created on specific subjects, such as Star Wars <<https://starwars.fandom.com/wiki/>>, The Lord of The Rings <<https://lotr.fandom.com/wiki/>> and Harry Potter <<https://harrypotter.fandom.com/wiki/>>, created by fans on Fandom, a website based on a philosophy of collaboration that hosts web pages free of charge using wiki technology.

⁸ The page is no longer available.

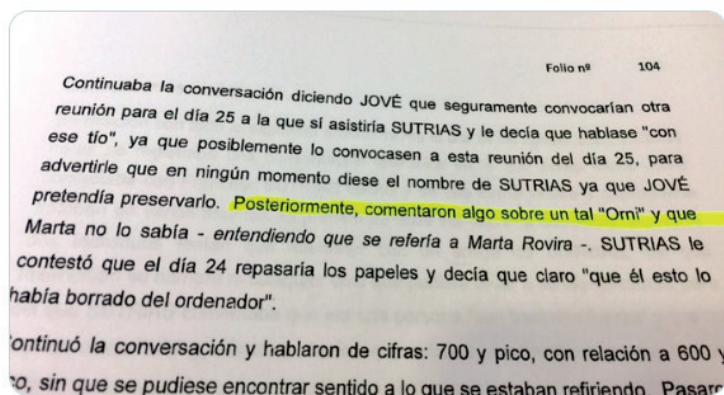
The name of the mayor, Mr Orni, is not attributable to chance and it's, in fact, another error. It comes from one of the statements on the meetings to prepare for the referendum of 1 October. As journalist Quico Sallés revealed in a tweet posted on 21 February 2018, the report referred to "a certain 'Orni'", thus personifying the Catalan expression *fer l'orni* meaning to feign disinterest. So, the name of the future mayor of the town, Mr Orni, was the result of a Spanish speaker's misinterpretation of the Catalan turn of phrase.



Quico Sallés
@QuicoSalles

...

Diria que la Guàrdia Civil que investiga l'1-O no sap que és "fer l'orni" i així ho delata l'atestat



12:39 p. m. · 21 de febr. de 2018 · Twitter for iPhone

3.697 Retuits 526 Tuits amb cita 4.848 Agradaments

Tweet from Quico Sallés with the report on Mr Orni. Source:
<<https://twitter.com/QuicoSalles/status/966276087822127104>> [Tweet viewed: June 2022]

The list of institutions and entities in the wiki included all the profiles in the town. Some were duplicated in the sense that they represented the same entity, while others were only active at the time of their creation, and still others were deactivated shortly afterwards. Below is a list of these profiles ordered by type as of November 2019. Deactivated profiles were not included.

<i>Type</i>	<i>Number of profiles</i>	<i>Examples of profile types</i>
Government	25	6 councillors
Education	33	23 schools, 8 universities, 3 King Juan Carlos universities, 10 language schools, 8 faculties, 4 academies, 7 recreation venues
Healthcare	21	5 hospitals, 9 clinics, 19 mental health centres, 9 funeral homes, 11 alternative therapy centres, 9 veterinarians
Sports	109	8 squash clubs, 7 pétanque clubs, 6 golf clubs, 6 diving associations
Media	53	7 radio stations, 15 TV channels, 24 print media outlets
Culture	22	5 groups of <i>diables</i> , 13 human tower groups, 4 stick dancer groups
Music	36	
Public bodies	96	7 tourist offices, 9 museums, 12 legal bodies, 7 prisons, 24 law enforcement agencies, 12 security forces (Guardia Civil and military)
Foreign policy	41	22 foreign (but closer to home) policy bodies
Environment, Territory and Sustainability	49	
Transport	19	8 railways, 6 road network, 7 airports, 7 airlines, 5 taxi companies
Science	14	12 space agencies, 5 observatories
Technology	24	
Telecommunications	5	
Farming	14	
Retail	65	39 food shops, 9 supermarkets, 10 large supermarkets
Catering	61	6 fast food outlets
Industry	9	
Energy	7	
Port	11	6 fishermen

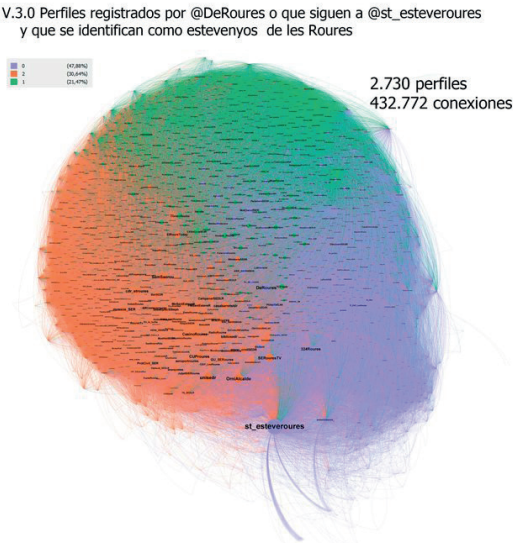
Services	84	8 computer companies, 19 publishing services, 17 magic/spiritual businesses, 26 pet and animal centres, 11 pharmacies, 9 hairdressers and beauty salons, 6 video clubs
Cinema	12	
Accommodation	28	5 campsites
Economy	22	
Associations	203	7 hiking associations, 12 LGBTI associations, 19 football clubs, 71 miscellaneous associations, 60 clubs, 9 motorbike associations
Trade unions	11	
Alcohol	18	
Leisure	49	35 brothels, 6 cannabis clubs
Drugs	6	
Art	8	
Individuals	139	49 names, 102 professionals and freelancers, 83 relocated celebrities, 28 politicians, 1 animated food product
Professional associations	16	
Political parties	58	
Tabarnia	6	
Religion	39	
Sister cities	11	15 entities from Arbog, 21 entities from Arenas de Mar, 2 entities from the city of Menorca, 6 entities from A Pesar de Mar
Non-sister cities	1	
Festivals	15	
Senior citizens	14	
Other groups	92	

According to the website, there were a total of 2,566 profiles. However, this is not the only way to determine the number of Sant Esteve de les Roures profiles. According to the Sant Esteve de les Roures census (Municipal Register of Institutions, Entities, Things, Good People and Riff-Raff of our Great Little Town. Our maxim is, IF WE DON'T FOLLOW YOU, YOU DON'T EXIST) there were 2,476 profiles.



Profile of the Sant Esteve de les Roures Register. Source: <<https://twitter.com/DeRoures>> [date viewed: June 2022].

Mariluz Congosto, a researcher specialising in the propagation of messages and defining users on Twitter, analysed the profiles in the Sant Esteve de les Roures register and profiles that followed the town council⁹ and identified themselves as residents of the town. The results showed 2,730 profiles with 432,772 connections, and three different user groups defined by how the users followed each other. There was obviously no agreement in calculating the total number of Sant Esteve de les Roures profiles, but all the estimates were around 2,500 profiles.



Sant Esteve de les Roures profiles according to an analysis conducted by Mariluz Congosto, May 2019. Source: <<https://twitter.com/congosto/status/1124235522270953472>> [date viewed: June 2022].

⁹ Account currently suspended, as mentioned before in note 5.

2.1 Two Sant Esteve de les Roures entities

Among the more than 2,500 profiles created on Twitter, two were of particular interest, both for their activity and for their interaction with other real and fictional profiles. These profiles created a sense of community, especially early on, in the months in which the Sant Esteve phenomenon began to blossom.

2.1.1 The Sant Esteve de les Roures Town Council

This was the first profile created, in March 2018. In November 2019, it had 35,852 followers. In its first tweets, it was announced as the official profile of the town council of the municipality and interacted with its first followers.¹⁰ On 18 April 2018, journalist Mariola Dinarès interviewed the mayor of Sant Esteve de les Roures on the programme Popap on Catalunya Ràdio.¹¹ That same day, a video filmed by the municipality's television station was posted in which the mayor explained the origin of the town.

Presentation of the profile of the Sant Esteve de les Roures Town Council and its first interactions with other users.



¹⁰ Although the account is suspended, user responses and interactions with the municipality can still be read: <https://twitter.com/st_esteve_roures/status/980044790313168896> [date viewed: June 2022].

¹¹ Interview available at: <<https://www.ccma.cat/catràdio/alacarta/popap/entrevista-exclusiva-a-l'alcalde-de-sant-esteve-de-les-roures/audio/999662/>> [date viewed: June 2022].



Screenshot from the video on the municipality's television station in which the mayor explains its origin. The video is no longer available.

2.1.2 The University of Sant Esteve de les Roures

The university of the invented municipality, whose motto is “Fortis et Sapiens Quam Quercus” (as strong and wise as an oak; *roure* is oak in Catalan), has its own Twitter profile (created in April 2018, currently with 5,962 followers)¹² as well as its own website¹³ with detailed information about the university.

The University of Sant Esteve de les Roures continues a tradition of higher education that dates back to the Modern Age. As a public university, it provides public services in the areas of teaching, research and knowledge transfer in its fields.

There is also a greeting from the rector, Dr Orni de Sant Esteve (the same name as the mayor and in the statement mentioned above), a course catalogue and a list of institutions and schools in the municipality for internships (linking to other Sant Esteve de les Roures profiles), as well as its history, which dates to the 17th century.

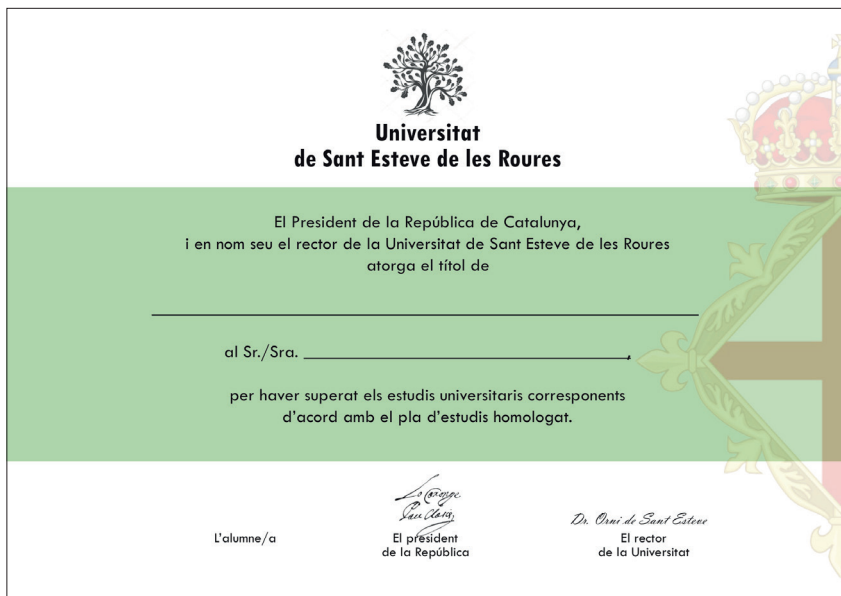
The Estudi General, the predecessor of the University of Sant Esteve de les Roures, was founded in 1641 by the President of the Republic of Catalonia, Hon. Mr Pau Claris i Casademunt, who granted Sant Esteve de les Roures the prerogative of bestowing degrees in grammar, rhetoric, philosophy and theology, law, and medicine. Instruction was provided by municipal trustees and the Church in the location of the current Les Roures building, which was constructed specifically to serve as a university

¹² <<https://twitter.com/unisedr>> [date viewed: June 2022].

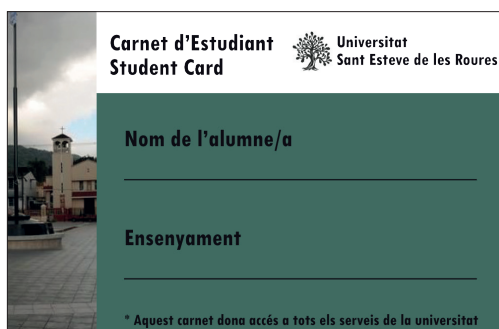
¹³ Address: <<https://unisedr.wordpress.com/>> [date viewed: June 2022].

campus. University studies were expanded, and with it the university's prestige, until 1717 when the University was forced to close due to the Nova Planta Decree and the loss of Catalonia's political identity.

The university has an online shop where visitors can buy T-shirts and notebooks with the university logo.¹⁴ It is also possible to download and personalise different documents: a university degree with the major of your choice, a student identity card, an employee identity card and a ballot to vote for Dr Orni in any electoral process.

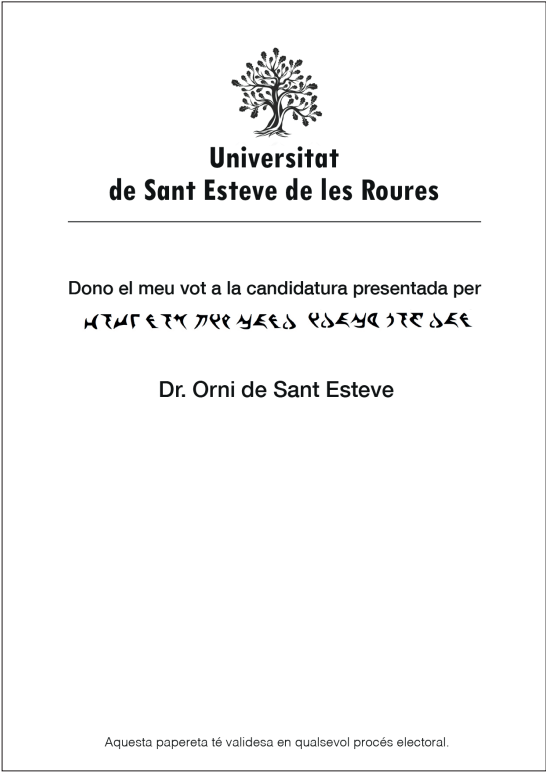


Customisable University of Sant Esteve de les Roures degree.



University of Sant Esteve de les Roures student identity card.

¹⁴ Address: <<https://unisedr.wordpress.com/botiga-de-la-usedr/>> [date viewed: June 2022].



Ballot to vote for Dr Orni de Sant Esteve in any electoral process.

The ballot to vote in any electoral process is also available in Klingon.¹⁵

One of the missions of the University of Sant Esteve de les Roures is to support society’s democratic processes to the best of its ability. In order to facilitate this process in elections where, in the view of voters, candidates do not represent the values of freedom and democracy enshrined in our republic’s constitution, the agreement of the Council of the USEDOR of 4 May 2018 on the standardisation of ballot documents was published in the Official Gazette of the USEDOR. As indicated, this agreement establishes the universal and transdimensional candidacy of the Magnificent Dr Orni de Sant Esteve in all manner of electoral processes. Ballots are available in Catalan and Klingon, and official sizes are 105×148.5 mm.

Sant Esteve de les Roures’ vibrancy is clearly evidenced in interactions with the profiles, especially in the first months after the birth of the phenomenon. This interaction has two central facets. Firstly, the various different profiles made reference to one other, which helped to build a virtual community that grew day by day, especially between March and May of 2018. This highlighted the “realism”

¹⁵ Klingon is an artificial language created by Marc Okrand and spoken by Klingons in the Star Trek universe.

of the fictional community. The town council and the university excelled in this by encouraging interaction between the different existing profiles. And, secondly, these same profiles also interacted with real profiles, public figures and entities that actually existed, as in the case mentioned above of the Guardia Civil. As Albert Cuesta explains:

One interesting facet is the volume of interaction generated by the digital municipality. Outwardly, some profiles seek visibility by offering services to popular tweeters. In other cases, they're public figures who challenge the town's society. Lluís Llach has offered to sign books; Empar Moliner is running for councillor of underwear; and Salvador Cardús is challenging the current mayor, Josep Orni (a reference to another overly creative judicial report). One of the most surprising turns in this case was the real Guardia Civil ridiculing and publicly insulting the town council of the fictitious municipality they had helped to invent. Interactions within the virtual municipality were also of interest. The school thanks civil protection bodies for helping in an evacuation following a fire, and Sant Esteve's four pharmacies arranged an out-of-hours pharmacy schedule (Cuesta 2018).



Example the University of Sant Esteve de les Roures interacting with other real and fictitious profiles.

3. Similarity with other non-existent places

Sant Esteve de les Roures is not an isolated case of a fictional location that for some reason has taken on a life of its own. Below, we'll have a look at a few others that can be traced back to certain mistakes.

3.1 Arralde

This locality in the Basque Country is the setting for the fictional Basque-language television series *Goenkale* (High Street), broadcast on ETB1 between 1994 and 2015. Judge Baltasar Garzón ordered police forces to prevent a ceremony honouring three Basque prisoners from taking place after the association Dignidad y Justicia (Dignity and Justice), formerly known as the Fundación Víctimas del Terrorismo (Victims of Terrorism Foundation), filed a complaint. The agents told the judge that the order had no criminal content, but the newspaper *ABC* reported it (Piqué 2018). Twitter user Jonathan Martínez recalled the case and asked for support to help make Arralde and Sant Esteve de les Roures sister cities.¹⁶

3.2 Gerri Adams de la Sal

According to a news item published in *El Confidencial Digital* in September 2019,¹⁷ the cultural association Lo Vent del Port, working with the political party Esquerra Republicana (Republican Left of Catalonia), was preparing a referendum to change the name of the municipality of Gerri de la Sal to Gerri Adams de la Sal in homage to Gerry Adams, the historic leader of Sinn Féin. According to the media, the mayor of the municipality denied the existence of such an initiative, but that didn't prevent the story from being published, only to be later retracted. According to an opinion piece by Jaume Clotet published in *Tarragona Digital*, the case can be traced back to an attempt to reveal the predisposition of certain Spanish media to publish news of any kind on the political and social situation in Catalonia without any contrasting views. In the words of Jaume Clotet:

The fact is that this Spanish media [*El Confidencial Digital*] is, one could say, a veritable academy of lack of rigour. I verified this myself a couple of years ago. Some friends of mine (to use a classic exculpatory expression) decided to check to what extent some state media's hysteria caused them to lose sight of their professionalism. At that time, the sovereignty votes were beginning and the atmosphere in the city was heated. My friends retouched an image of the entrance to Gerri de la Sal and put Gerri Adams on it. At the same time, they constructed a plausible story in which the townspeople, spurred on by independence fever and in solidarity with the Irish people, called for a referendum to change the name of the town Gerri de la Sal to Gerri Adams. They finished it with a plausible text and sent it to some media outlets in Madrid to see what would happen (Clotet 2015).

¹⁶ Tweet no longer available.

¹⁷ 'The mayor of Gerri de la Sal (in the province of Lleida) denies the claim that a referendum is underway to change the name of the town to Gerri Adams.' *El Confidencial Digital*, 16/09/2019 <<https://www.elconfidencialdigital.com/articulo/politica/Gerri-Sal-Lerida-referendum-Adams/20090916000000056302.html>> [date viewed: June 2022].

3.3 *Nambia*

On 20 September 2017, in a meeting with African leaders, then US President Donald Trump twice referred to “Nambia” as a country instead of Namibia. Humorous and critical reactions were swift (Taylor 2017) and included an appearance of the Republic of Nambia on Twitter (@NambiaOf) which thanked the US president for his gesture. “Did somebody finally mention me?”¹⁸ its profile read, “It’s about time we become famous. Thank you, Trump”.

3.4 *Veyshnorია*

In September 2017, Russia and Belarus, “the last dictatorships of Europe”, conducted a joint military exercise called Zapad (west) 2017. In the scenario of the exercise, Russia and Belarus were defending themselves militarily against incursions by the separatist state of Veyshnorია in western Belarus. The map depicting this fictitious enemy quickly circulated online and users began spreading memes and jokes on social media. In less than a day, Veyshnorია emerged as an alternative fictional country to the real Belarus (Astapova & Navumau 2018: 436).

Although not a real country, Veyshnorია had an elaborate political and economic structure described on social networks (Twitter, Facebook and VK, a Russian social network) and on its website. Civic artist Ales Mazur launched the website, which immediately became the focus of a project spearheaded by a group of activists. Symbols were immediately suggested, the history of this country was written, and its language was developed, a historical version of Belarusian written in Latin script (Astapova & Navumau 2018: 437). Aleh Larychau, a representative of the activist group that created the project, expressed his surprise at its impact and at people’s selfless involvement:

Larychau (2017) expressed his astonishment at how engaged these volunteers were, actively involved in writing the constitution and mythological history of Veyshnorია, suggesting further directions for the improvement of the website, and investing their free time and efforts into the implementation of these ideas in practice. Thanks to their efforts, the website quickly became a self-regulated creative environment where new ideas could be discussed, tested, and implemented, providing an opportunity for experiments in forming a full-fledged state (Astapova & Navumau 2018: 437-438).

Larychau also underscored the importance of humour:

There is nothing more serious than jokes. Through humour we may attract more people. [...]

Through humour and laughter we can raise serious questions. There are no other ways for it now (Astapova & Navumau 2018: 441).

Social media became a valuable tool for attracting public attention to this fictional country. Users posted fake news and parodies on social media that reached a large audience. The creators of Veyshnorია used fake news as a parody and as political satire (Astapova & Navumau 2018: 438-439), not to spread false messages for a political purpose. As Reilly (2012: 273) notes, “satirical fake news

¹⁸ <<https://twitter.com/NambiaOf/status/910612393008467968>> [date viewed: June 2022].

significantly reframed public discourse". Similarly, "satirical fake news levels its critique against various actors and institutions". Fictitious profiles that deliberately and openly publish fake news for humorous purposes would be a good example.

As Wedgwood (2000: 959) notes, "The cultural existence of a people or ethnicity—a collective sense of shared history and common fate—does not suffice for international recognition unless a group can also claim a territory". This is where so-called cyber-nations come into play, nations that exist solely on the internet, examples of which include the Republic of Lomar, with 4,100 citizens, created by a computer systems administrator (Wedgwood 2000: 960); the Kingdom of Talossa, founded in 1981, with 50 citizens, which "claims a mythic connection to the Berbers of North Africa, and a language that favours the letter X and the umlaut. Its foreign policy is to recognize other micronations and its leisure activity its politics, holding mock elections every eight months" (Wedgwood 2000: 961). It also includes the Dominion of Melchizedek, which claims the territory of an abandoned Pacific island and additional territory in Antarctica (Wedgwood 2000: 961). Its founder, David Korem, says that "The more they talk about us, the more they write about us, the more real we become in the eyes of the world" (Wedgwood 2000: 963).

Another concept to consider in this same vein is the virtual nation, which combines imagination and historical immanence:

By 'virtual entity' we mean any legendary, fictional, imaginary or non-territorial entity, including those that can bring together substantial numbers of citizens in structures whose reality and permanence cannot be doubted (cited in Wedgwood 2000: 962).

Although Sant Esteve de les Roures shares some of the features of these cyber-nations or virtual nations, it cannot be considered one because it lacks, for example, unity or a common project shared by all the people involved in the community. As we have seen, the creation of the different Twitter profiles was not the result of a plan, as evidenced by the fact that many services and entities were created repeatedly. What they all have in common is that they would not exist without the internet. This is a clear example of contemporary folklore expressed through the tools we use today in interactions, which go far beyond direct contact between people, as referred to by Ben-Amos.¹⁹

It is tempting to note the advent of digital culture or cyber culture with computer technologies as the signal context for more considerations of ethnography rather than performance which suggests face-to-face communication. I have referred to the start of this movement earlier commensurate with the rise in popularity of the prefix "hyper" to imply an acceleration of information, and the cybernetic defiance of nature, characteristic of modernization and new communication technologies. Reference to "hyper" also questions connotative uses of human behaviour and the kind of cognitive thinking that is forced to react instantaneously to multiple messages, often in short symbolic statements or actions. The implication culturally is that, rather than being passive couch potatoes

¹⁹ A definition that Ben-Amos later qualified (Ben-Amos 2014 and 2020) to include changes that have taken place since his first proposed definition, created in 1971.

as predicted with the rise of television, prosumers—that is, those individuals who simultaneously produce as well as consume capital on multiple devices—are forced to be always wired, always on, and therefore continuously active and mobile, or in an analytical sense, in defiance of time being able to be hyper 24/7 (Bronner 2019: 290-291).

In this sense, the internet has perhaps changed the rules of the game, while folklore, unsurprisingly, has adapted to it.²⁰ Referring to memes, McNeill notes how digital folklore often blurs the separation between genres, but the process (the communicative act) is maintained on a larger scale.

Overall, one of the main things we find in digital folk culture is a blurring of the barriers between the levels of culture, so that we get mass-media techniques (film, photography, graphic editing, far-reaching broadcast, etc.) used in the creation and sharing of folklore. We also see a blurring between the genres of folklore, so that we have images and words and actions all coming together in a single form. Is an Internet meme something we say? Something we make? Something we do? Or all three? It's still very much a folk process, just on a different (and generally intriguing and exciting) scale (McNeill 2013: 85).

In addition to a sample of a community created in this current “hyper” context of social networks, the creation of Sant Esteve de les Roures is also a good example of the mechanisms that folklore offers us as a means to endure tragic and stressful situations through humour:

Joking gives people the ability to withstand the stress of tragic events while enabling mass culture to resist the constraints of the emotional control imposed by the media following a tragedy. Humorous expression and other symbolic rhetoric often surfaces in order to alleviate the tensions that may arise from the social anxieties at hand (Blank 2013: 9).

Sant Esteve de les Roures is also the sum of several factors, such as humour about the error in the police report, reacting to the violent actions of the police forces during the referendum of 1 October, and voicing opinions on Spain's reactionary role. As Alan Dundes explains:

Where there is anxiety, there will be jokes to express that anxiety. A society with political repression will generate an abundance of political jokes. Indeed, the more repressive the regime, the more numerous the political jokes (Dundes 1987: vii).

Josep M. Pujol, quoting Propp, gives us another clue about the role of humour, which he also interprets as a sign of intelligence:

Humour has two necessary conditions: spiritual or moral awareness, and external contradiction. But another, very important condition is missing (the two conditions I just referred to are necessary, but not sufficient): the contradiction must occur suddenly and be an authentic revelation to the intelligence, it must be an epiphany. Since humour always presupposes

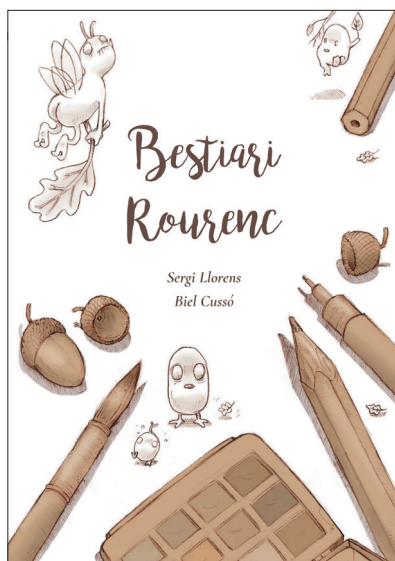
20 As Josep M. Pujol said, “Understood as a particular kind of communicative act, we must admit that folklore, like matter, is neither created nor destroyed, only transformed, and we need not worry about its preservation as long as two speakers survive on Earth” (Pujol 2013: 272).

an immediate attempt to analyse and overcome a situation or reality, laughter will always be inherent in intelligent people. With laughter we express that we have ultimately found meaning in a rule of behaviour that's been violated (Pujol 2013: 282).

4. Life beyond the internet: the *Bestiari Rourenc*

The people of Sant Esteve de les Roures have gone beyond the virtual, reaching us in tangible form, for example, in the T-shirts and notebooks sold by the university.²¹ Another example of Sant Esteve de les Roures' life beyond the internet is the publication of the *Bestiari Rourenc* (Bestiary of Sant Esteve de les Roures). The book was written by Biel Cussó and illustrated by Sergi Llorens. It is the result of a crowdfunding project launched on 26 June 2018. Of the 4,000 euros initially requested,²² 7,752 euros were donated by 328 people on the Verkami platform.²³

The bestiary is “a collection in encyclopaedia form of the beasts that live or have lived near the village of Sant Esteve de les Roures” which includes “stories starring some of the creatures catalogued”. Although the profile that promoted the project, and was its origin, was anonymous,²⁴ in this case we know who created the book (i.e., the illustrator and the author) because they put their names on it, as we can see below.



Cover of the *Bestiari Rourenc* by Sergi Llorens and Biel Cussó.

21 More customisable T-shirts and a tote bag can be found here: <<https://www.latostadora.com/titivil>> [date viewed: June 2022].

22 <<https://www.verkami.com/projects/20757-bestiari-rourenc>> [date viewed: June 2022].

23 Founded in 2010 in Mataró in the province of Barcelona, it is one of the best known and most used crowdfunding platforms in Europe.

24 <<https://twitter.com/dibuixantsedr>> [date viewed: June 2022].

Some of the beasts related to Catalan popular culture refer to customs and traditions, such as the *aglanets*, shy creatures that live in oak trees. When the children of Sant Esteve de les Roures lose a tooth, they bury it at the foot of an oak tree. The next day they'll find the tooth replaced with a gift (a coin or a bag of nuts). Others are more unpleasant or frightening, such as the *centpeura*, which climbs up the legs of children's beds who don't want to go to bed and pinches and cuts off their toes. Others refer to specific festivals, such as the *cudrac*, which was born in the bonfires on the night of Saint John's Eve. The bestiary also includes stories about some of these creatures that illustrate their traits or some remarkable event. For example, the legend of Sisdots is an example of a confrontation with darkness; Pere Escombria refers to the legend of a scarecrow made of brooms that saves a boy from Sant Esteve from a fire and winds up being burnt, which led to the tradition of putting a scarecrow in home gardens and watering it when the weather starts getting warmer.

5. A town (still) in the news

The Sant Esteve de les Roures phenomenon really began to take off in the months following the publication of the Guardia Civil report that gave the municipality its name. After some time had passed, some of the profiles set up were no longer updated or lost their initial comic freshness. Sant Esteve de les Roures lived on, however, as the following two examples show.

Firstly, on the occasion of the local elections of 26 May 2019, Mariluz Congosto (2019) analysed messages sent by the residents of Sant Esteve de les Roures in relation to the elections in Barcelona, considering that the invented municipality had more than 35,000 followers and was the second most popular Catalan municipality on Twitter after the city of Barcelona itself. The data she analysed shows that:

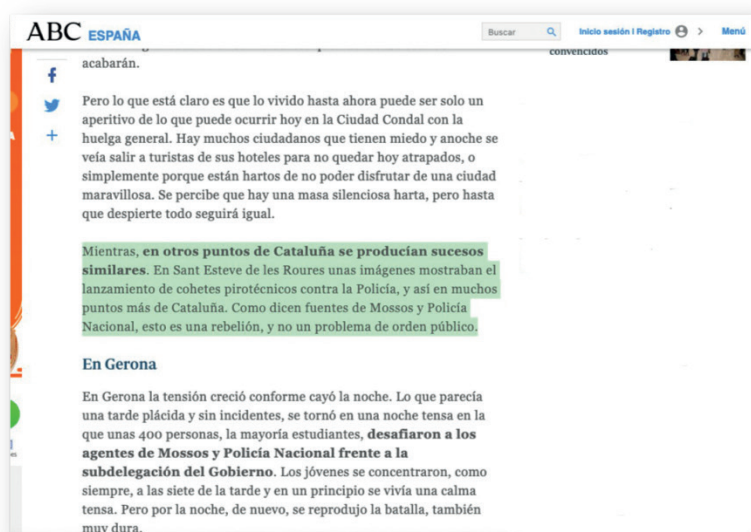
The followers of Sant Esteve de les Roures did not organise for the 26 May election campaign, although some of them eagerly supported Jordi Graupera (@JordiGraupera), Elsa Artadi (@elsa_artadi) and Quim Forn (@quimforn) in the Barcelona municipal elections. In general, they supported content from relevant pro-independence profiles and some humour profiles (Congosto 2019).

Congosto analysed the dissemination of content during the election campaign among the Sant Esteve de les Roures profiles, revealing that two fake profiles (@juliangrau and @anaoromi) were the most active disseminators. By far the most retweeted candidate was Jordi Graupera, followed by Elsa Artadi and Quim Forn. As for dialogue, which showed interaction between profiles (reach, mentions and comments), the result was similar but with a less marked difference, as Artadi and Forn were mentioned more frequently, which compensated for Graupera's reach.

For the second example, we need to go back to 19 October 2019. When covering events in Barcelona during the Catalan general strike on 18 October (called to coincide with the protests against the verdict of the 1 October trial),²⁵

²⁵ The protests against the court verdict in the Catalan independence process were a series of actions that took place in Catalonia following the publication of the verdict on 14 October 2019. The political defendants were unanimously convicted of sedition and embezzlement and the leaders of the civic organisations were convicted of sedition. The political response

the newspaper *ABC* reported on violence on the streets of Barcelona as well as in Sant Esteve de les Roures. In this case, the root of the misunderstanding was a video taken in Barcelona but posted on the Sant Esteve de les Roures Town Council Twitter's profile.



News item from the newspaper *ABC* on 19 October 2019.

6. Conclusions

As the saying goes, truth is sometimes stranger than fiction. Sometimes, a real detail can give rise to an entire imaginary world, as in the case of the municipality of Sant Esteve de les Roures. For a short time, this non-existent town – born of a single one-off mistake that took place exclusively online – had a multitude of services, shops and inhabitants (all virtual, of course) and absolutely no reason to envy other, very real places in this respect. Its existence cannot be explained outside of the specific context from which it emerged, not only in terms of its political and social dimensions, the complicated relations between Catalonia and Spain, which have been amplified in recent years due to the referendum on self-determination held on 1 October and its repercussions, but also because it could not have emerged without the existence of social networks and the internet.

Sant Esteve de les Roures is a good example of the power that humour can have, of how it works, and how, in this day and age, we can build communities by using imagination and ingenuity. Since time immemorial, Catalan popular culture has had a variety of fantastic places, from Mirmanda to Muntanya Blava, via the Illa d'Or, as Joan de Déu Prats and Maria Padilla write in their encyclopaedia *Indrets*

was limited to encouraging street demonstrations, while the citizen response was led by organisations such as the Democratic Tsunami, the Catalan National Assembly, Òmnium Cultural and the Committees for the Defence of the Republic (CDR).

fantàstics de Catalunya (Fantastic Places in Catalonia) (2019). This map should also include the municipality of Sant Esteve de les Roures, a town that was full of life for a few months and served as a humorous and critical vehicle for the difficult social and political situation in Catalonia.

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Ressenyes

Reviews



BEN-AMOS, Dan. *Folklore Concepts: Histories and Critiques*. Edited by Henry GLASSIE and Elliott ORING. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2020, xxi + 234 pàgines.

Folklore Concepts: Histories and Critiques

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Dan Ben-Amos (1934), catedràtic de Folklore i Estudis Asiàtics i de l'Orient Mitjà de la Universitat de Pennsilvània, figura entre els cinc folkloristes que esment i cit de manera més assídua a les sessions de l'assignatura Teoria del Folklore que impartesc a la Universitat de les Illes Balears. Els altres quatre són Alan Dundes, Heda Jason, Josep Maria Pujol i Roger D. Abrahams. Aquest darrer, en principi, havia de ser l'encarregat de preparar i editar el volum objecte d'aquesta ressenya, però malauradament va traspasar abans de poder fer-se'n càrrec. *Folklore Concepts: Histories and Critiques*, que varen preparar i editar finalment Henry Glassie i Elliott Oring, dos altres eminents folkloristes nord-americans, li està dedicat.

Obren el volum tres textos que compleixen amb escriu la funció introductòria que els és pròpia: «The Project» (p. ix-xiii), que signa Glassie; «The Contours of the Book» (p. xv-xvii), degut a Oring, i «Preface» (p. xix-xxi), que signa Ben-Amos mateix. Els dos primers forneixen el lector de tot un seguit d'informacions relatives a la carrera acadèmica del folklorista israelià, a l'aportació crítica i intel·lectual que ha fet a l'estudi del folklore i al procés de gestació del llibre; el tercer condensa en tres pàgines el que en podríem dir l'ideari folklorístic de Ben-Amos, que hi queda perfectament resumit en el darrer paràgraf:

Henry Glassie and Elliott Oring have selected for this lean volume several of my essays that, implicitly or explicitly, are concerned with the boundaries between and the interdependence of the academic and the symbolic modalities of folklore. As scholarship, folklore is not completely free from its ethnic—even nationalistic—objectives. The same ethnographic-historical method with which folklore scholars study folklore as a communicative act is applicable, with the necessary modifications, to folklore scholarship itself and to the symbolization of folklore in modern cultures, thereby freeing folklore from the burden of Romanticism.

El cos central del llibre és una selecció acurada de dotze treballs, publicats inicialment entre 1969 i 2014, representatius de l'enorme tasca intel·lectual i editorial de Dan Ben-Amos, autor d'una quantitat ingent d'articles, llibres i ressenyes.¹ En aquests treballs, l'ordenació dels quals en el volum no segueix cap criteri cronològic —cosa que hauria estat desitjable—, el folklorista israelià tracta diversos aspectes i temes que han esdevingut recurrents en la disciplina dels estudis folklorístics des que el 1846 William John Thoms va proposar, a les pàgines de *The Athenaeum*, el terme Folk-Lore, «a good Saxon compound», per descriure millor allò que a Anglaterra se solia designar amb els termes «Popular Antiquities» o «Popular Literature».

¹ A <<https://www.sas.upenn.edu/folklore/faculty/dbamos/dbabib.html>> se'n pot consultar la llista de les cent setanta-set publicacions seves aparegudes entre 1963 i 1999.

El primer d'aquests temes recurrents és la definició mateixa del concepte de folklore, a la qual estan dedicats els capítols 1, 3, 11 i 12. «The Idea of folklore» (p. 1-7) se centra a exposar i a explicar algunes de les assumpcions bàsiques que s'han associat històricament al concepte de folklore i que varen ser recurrents entre els primers usuaris del terme —tradicionalitat, irracionalitat, oralitat, ruralisme— i a posar-ne en relleu el caràcter contradictori: el folklore, per una banda, es considerava estrictament vinculat a una comunitat i, per altra, se'l considerava un fenomen universal. «Toward a Definition of Folklore in Context» (p. 23-39) és, segurament, l'article més conegut, influent i revolucionari de Ben-Amos, ja que hi proposa una redefinició pragmaticocontextual del concepte que té dues implicacions fonamentals: la tradicionalitat deixa de ser-ne un criteri definidor i la idea mateixa de folklore hi passa de designar un conjunt de manifestacions de la cultura immaterial i/o material a designar un procés comunicatiu configurat artísticament que té lloc entre persones que estan en contacte directe: «folklore is not an aggregate of things, but a process—a communicative process, to be exact [...] is a social interaction via the art media and differs from other modes of speaking and gesturing [...] it is a definite realistic, artistic, and communicative process» (p. 30). «The Name Is the Thing» (p. 175-202), publicat inicialment el 2009, constitueix alhora una defensa de la folklorística com a disciplina acadèmica —una disciplina que havia entrat en crisi en l'àmbit acadèmic i universitari nord-americà, com ja havia advertit Alan Dundes el 2004 al discurs presidencial plenari que va adreçar als membres de l'American Folklore Society— i del manteniment del terme folklore per designar la dita disciplina i alhora el seu objecte d'estudi, contra la proposta d'alguns estudiosos de substituir el terme —que no deixa encara avui dia de revelar-se com a problemàtic— per uns altres de menys marcats. Finalment, «A Definition of Folklore: A Personal Narrative» (p. 203-223) és un relat sobre el procés d'elaboració de la seva famosa definició de folklore; la primera versió d'aquest treball va prendre la forma de ponència al congrés internacional «L'Estudi del Folklore: Teoria, Història, Arxius», que va tenir lloc a Tarragona els dies 20 i 21 de juny de 2013 en memòria de Josep Maria Pujol, que va ser el primer que, el 1985, va donar notícia en l'àmbit acadèmic dels Països Catalans de les aportacions teòriques de Ben-Amos, Dundes, Abrahams i Jason.

Els capítols 2 i 6 del volum giren a l'entorn de la història del concepte de folklore i de la folklorística. «The Encounter with Native Americans and the Emergence of Folklore» (p. 8-22) analitza l'impacte que el descobriment d'Amèrica va tenir sobre les humanitats i l'efecte que la descoberta d'una alteritat tan radical va tenir sobre els europeus, que es varen veure obligats a confrontar el seu propi passat nacional a partir d'una altra mena d'alteritat: la de les antiguitats pròpies, manifestades en costums, creences, pràctiques i relats que acabarien per esdevenir l'objecte d'estudi inicial del folklore. «A History of Folklore Studies—Why Do We Need It?» (p. 99-109), en canvi, advoca per una necessària reavaluació de la història de la folklorística a fi d'assegurar-ne la continuació i la reorientació teòrica i pràctica.

Al capítol 4, «Analytical Categories and Ethnic Genres» (p. 40-63), Ben-Amos posa el focus en la diferència entre els gèneres propis de la literatura oral i les categories analítiques a què recorren els folkloristes per conceptualitzar-los i classificar-los, i hi exposa els quatre mètodes principals —temàtic, holístic, arquetípic i funcional— amb què els acadèmics han mirat de fonamentar científicament l'estudi del folklore.

El capítol 5, «The Seven Strands of *Tradition*: Varieties in Its Meaning in American Folklore Studies» (p. 64-98), és un repàs molt ben documentat de l'ús que els folkloristes nord-americans fan del concepte de tradició, que es tradueix en set accepcions diferents: la tradició s'hi defineix com a coneixement, com a procés, com a canón, com a massa, com a cultura, com a llengua i com a *performance*. La conclusió a què arriba l'autor és que cada folklorista o especialista fa servir aquestes accepcions a la seva manera i segons les seves pròpies necessitats o premisses teòriques i que «none is more adequate than the other, none is more proper than the other» (p. 91).

Els capítols 8 i 10 estan dedicats al concepte de context. El primer, «Context in Context» (p. 140-154), és una defensa de la necessitat de posar en relació els textos folklòrics amb el seu context de producció o d'actualització —d'ús, en definitiva— a fi de poder procedir a interpretar-los de manera adequada. El segon, «Induced Natural Context in Context» (p. 165-174), se centra a estudiar el concepte de context natural induït que va proposar Kenneth S. Goldstein, a la seva *A Guide for Field Workers in Folklore* (1964), amb la finalitat de manipular algunes situacions de treball de camp per tal de documentar-hi mostres de comunicació folklòrica i, també, per experimentar-hi sobre els processos de transmissió del folklore i sobre les dinàmiques del seu ús en societat.

«The Concept of Motif in Folklore» (p. 110-139), que constitueix el capítol 7 del llibre, és un treball dens i extens centrat a analitzar un dels conceptes clau de la folklorística, sobretot de la que està directament vinculada a l'Escola Historicogeogràfica finlandesa, i a posar-lo en relació amb altres concrecions teòriques d'aquest mateix concepte en els estudis literaris i en la història de l'art. Per la complexitat mateixa del concepte, Ben-Amos clou el treball amb l'asserció que l'interès acadèmic per l'estudi del motiu no es pot limitar a la conceptualització que en fa Stith Thompson al *Motif Index of Folk Literature* (1955-58), sinó que ha de tenir en compte tota la gamma d'idees i de controvèrsies que varen fer part del desenvolupament del concepte des del romanticisme fins a l'estructuralisme.

El capítol 9, finalment, «Two Benin Storytellers» (p. 155-164), està dedicat a comparar l'activitat de dos narradors Edo, un de tradicional i l'altre més innovador, a fi de posar en relleu les dimensions personal, social i econòmica de l'art narrativa de cadascun.

Tanca el llibre un índex onomàstic, temàtic i de paraules clau (p. 225-234) que és d'una gran utilitat per al lector.

Oring remarca que «in reading these essays, students will be introduced, and scholars reintroduced, to the intellectual history of the field» (p. xvii). Jo hi afegiria que els estudiants i els especialistes hi tendran accés al nucli central del pensament d'un dels folkloristes més influents del segle XX i del que duim ja del XXI. Un folklorista que, amb un estil alhora planer i acadèmic, domina una gran quantitat de referents metodològics i teòrics i un ampli suport bibliogràfic que li serveixen per fonamentar les seves anàlisis afinades i penetrants i que té la convicció que «it is necessary to broaden the perspective of folklore and consider it as a concept with three modalities: an act, a cultural symbol, and a research subject» (p. xix).

MOSCOSO GARCÍA, Francisco: *Cuentos del Sáhara Argelino recogidos por el P. Yves Alliaume*. Estudio y edición bilingüe árabe argelino del Sáhara español de los textos por F. Moscoso García. Colección Textos semíticos, Serie Árabea 1. Córdoba: UCOPress, 2021, 256 p.

Cuentos del Sáhara Argelino recogidos por el P. Yves Alliaume

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Entre las publicaciones recientes sobre el patrimonio narrativo oral de Marruecos y Argelia, destaca la labor de Francisco Moscoso García, arabista especializado en dialectología, cuyo interés por los cuentos de tradición oral parece —por lo menos en parte— responder a esa conexión entre el estudio del patrimonio folklórico y la lexicología y dialectología que se remonta al siglo XIX. Entre los méritos de este investigador, se cuenta el de haber rescatado las recopilaciones del misionero francés Yves Alliaume, de la orden de los Padres Blancos, fundada en 1868 por el cardenal Charles Lavigerie. Los Padres Blancos se distinguieron desde el principio y, de forma generalizada, por su interés por las lenguas locales, por lo que solían apuntar diariamente cuentos, leyendas y anécdotas, así como otras muestras de literatura oral local.¹ Entre ellos, parece que el padre Yves Alliaume estaba dotado con un talento especial para la comunicación y la recopilación.

En el marco de las publicaciones de la Editorial de la Universidad de Córdoba, vio la luz en 2021 un cuidado y riguroso volumen —en el que Moscoso García reúne 128 cuentos—, que Alliaume recopiló a lo largo de sus más de cincuenta años de estancia en distintas zonas del Sáhara argelino. Se trata de narraciones que el estudioso español selecciona de los etnotextos recogidos por el Padre Blanco (con la colaboración de seis monjas, para la parte de la zona de Touggourt), que Moscoso García rescató del olvido en estos últimos años. Este localizó los manuscritos de Alliaume en la sede de las Monjas blancas en París y en la de los Padres Blancos en Ghardaia. Antes de preparar el libro que nos ocupa, Moscoso García editó y publicó en sendos volúmenes los manuscritos íntegros: *Literatura oral de Touggourt*² y *Dictons et Traditions. Littérature orale et Orientalisme catholique au Sahara algérien (1926-1975)*.³ De ambos ofreció el original en árabe argelino y la traducción; al español en el primer caso y al francés en el segundo. En este nuevo volumen nos ofrece solo los cuentos tradicionales con traducción al español después del texto árabe. Los relatos, aparte de estar en buena medida catalogados

1 Daniela MELFA: «Revue de l'Institut des belles-lettres arabes - IBLA, n. 200 (número special), 70^e année, 2007-2». *Africa: Rivista trimestrale di studi e documentazione dell'Istituto italiano per l'Africa e l'Oriente*, 63/3 (septiembre 2008): 532.

2 Yves ALLIAUME: *Literatura oral de Touggourt*, edición, presentación, notas, glosario y bibliografía de Francisco Moscoso García. Biblioteca de Literatura Oral y Cultura Popular. Serie Literatura, Etnografía, Antropología. Alcalá de Henares: El jardín de la Voz. Área de Teoría de la Literatura y Literatura Comparada de la Universidad de Alcalá/Instituto de Investigaciones Filológicas de la UNAM, 2015.

3 Francisco MOSCOSO GARCÍA: *Dictons et Traditions. Littérature orale et Orientalisme catholique au Sahara algérien (1926-1975)*. *Boletín de Literatura oral*, anejo 2 (2020): 1-1116. DOI: 10.17561/blo.vanejo12 [fecha de consulta: 27/07/2022].

según la clasificación internacional ATU,⁴ disponen de una introducción general en la que Moscoso comenta y analiza algunas de sus características, empezando por las variantes lingüísticas en las que se contaron.

El historiador francés Ferdinand Braudel definió el Mediterráneo como el «continente líquido» y, a pesar de la actual división geopolítica de este mar en una zona occidental que reúne España, Francia e Italia hasta los Balcanes; otra oriental, que va desde Turquía hasta Egipto; y una franja meridional sahariana desde Marruecos hasta Libia, cuentos como los que recogió Yves Alliaume nos demuestran que corrientes culturales unificadoras siguen recorriendo el *Mare Nostrum* de una orilla a otra, llevando y trayendo entre épocas y culturas narraciones propias de una realidad múltiple. Son cuentos, en definitiva, que se transforman y se adaptan constantemente, manteniendo sin embargo su esencia. Así, Yves Alliaume, en pleno siglo XX, recogió avatares de narraciones muy conocidas desde la Edad Media, como la «Historia del diamante» (se trata del cuento 2.12 del volumen), en la que, en una versión algo simplificada, pervive una vieja parábola judía o persa —a no ser que con Vittore Branca nos queramos remontar incluso al mito egipcio de Isis que manda hacer simulacros del cadáver de Osiris para que los distintos sacerdotes piensen que disponen del cuerpo auténtico de la divinidad—. La historia tuvo su recorrido en la literatura occidental desde el anónimo *Novellino* italiano del siglo XIII, pasando por el tercer cuento de la primera jornada del *Decamerón* («Melchisedech giudeo, con una novella di tre anella, cessa un gran pericolo dal Saladino apparecchiato») y llegando hasta Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. Los giros a los que está expuesta la parábola de las tres piedras preciosas (o los tres anillos), siempre en equilibrio entre una mayor o menor tolerancia y fácil convivencia entre las tres religiones monoteístas del Mediterráneo, arrojan en la versión argelina un resultado en el que los dos protagonistas de la narración pierden parte de su carisma. En lugar del gran Saladino, cuyo recuerdo en la narrativa europea atraviesa los siglos,⁵ encontramos a un anónimo sultán. El judío no demuestra la sabiduría propia del boccacciano Melquisedec o del Nathan de Lessing, sino que, gracias a una pequeña contaminación con otro conocido motivo folklórico, tiene que recurrir a la inteligencia de una hija, que con desparpajo le sugiere salir del paso contando al sultán la parábola de marras, en una versión en la que indudablemente solo una de las religiones es un diamante (las otras son simples cristales, aunque diamantes parecen). El elemento poco usual de esta versión es que el sultán pone en aprietos a su ministro judío por culpa de la envidia y los celos de los demás ministros porque, a pesar de que el primero sea de religión israelita, él lo tiene en alta estima y considera que «su trabajo es irreprochable, me da buenos consejos, no ha hecho nada para que lo eche» (p. 105). Posiblemente, el desconocido narrador que confió su cuento a Alliaume estaba retratando así esa convivencia relativamente buena entre distintas religiones, que se dio en el Maghreb hasta los años sesenta del siglo pasado, o quizá, simplemente, en ese diálogo interpsíquico que siempre se establece en una narración oral, se hacía eco

4 Hans-Jörg UTHER: *The Types of International Folktales. A classification and Bibliography. Based on the System of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson*. 3 vols. Folklore Fellows' Communications 284, 285, 286. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 2004.

5 Andrea BORRUSO: *Dall'India a Parigi. Motivi orientali e arabo-islamici nelle letterature europee*. Milano: FrancoAngeli, 2001.

del profundo respeto que su interlocutor demostraba por la religión islámica, a pesar de ser un misionero católico.⁶

Siguiendo con cuentos dotados también de trasfondo religioso, como estudio de cuentos populares sicilianos no he podido no alegrarme al encontrar versiones magrebíes de cuentos que, aparte de existir en distintas zonas de la tierra, encontramos difundidas especialmente en la zona occidental del Mediterráneo y que aparecen, por ejemplo, en las recopilaciones de Giuseppe Pitrè y en el índice de Cirese y Serafini,⁸ como el tipo ATU 774P (*St Peter and the Nuts*), del que el estudioso siciliano recoge tres versiones distintas en sus *Fiabe e leggende popolari siciliane* (2016) y que en el libro de Moscoso está presente en una versión que no está catalogada por el autor. Se trata del cuento 4.31: «Dios hace bien lo que hace» (procedente de la recopilación *Dictons et Traditions*).⁹ Una vez más, Alliaume recoge narraciones con protagonistas sin nombre, por lo que, en lugar de San Pedro y sus polémicas con Jesucristo, nos topamos con un anónimo hortelano que se limita a pensar que habría sido más acertado que Dios hubiera puesto calabazas en las palmeras en lugar de dátiles. Por otra parte, la mítica hazaña de robar el fuego a un ser de otro mundo, mito fundacional presente en muchísimas culturas y que en Italia se asocia a San Antonio, la breve narración recogida en este volumen (2.15) corre a cargo de una anciana y su «bastón de hinojo». Como en muchas otras versiones magrebíes,¹⁰ confían a una vieja y su caña la obtención de un elemento que, como afirma Ignazio E. Buttitta, «inaugura una nuova dimensione dell'esistere».¹¹ Al principio del relato, el anónimo narrador o narradora introduce la historia diciendo: «había una aldea en la que nadie tenía fuego para hacer la cena», una pequeña anotación de sabor cotidiano que es también una huella indiscutible de cómo, en los mitos sobre el fuego, la relación de este último con el hecho de poder cocinar la comida es un aspecto fundamental: «con l'idea che è solo attraverso il possesso del fuoco, per le sue virtù culinarie, gli uomini sono divenuti veramente umani».¹²

6 FRANCISCO MOSCOSO GARCÍA: *Dictons et Traditions. Littérature orale et Orientalisme catholique au Sahara algérien (1926-1975)*. *Boletín de Literatura oral*, anejo 2 (2020): 14. DOI: 10.17561/blo.vanejo12 [fecha de consulta: 27/07/2022].

7 GIUSEPPE PITRÈ: *Fiabe e leggende popolari siciliane*. Edición completa en dialecto siciliano con texto en italiano en el anverso. Prefacio de Giovanni PUGLISI. Nota crítica de Jack ZIPES y apéndice sobre *La leggenda di Cola Pesce*. Roma: Donzelli, 2016 [1888].

8 ALBERTO CIRESE; LILIANA SERAFINI: *Tradizioni orali non cantate: primo inventario nazionale per tipi, motivi o argomenti di fiabe, leggende...*; con la colaboración inicial de Aurora Milillo. Roma: Discoteca di Stato, Ministero per i beni culturali e ambientali, 1975.

9 FRANCISCO MOSCOSO GARCÍA: *Dictons et Traditions. Littérature orale et Orientalisme catholique au Sahara algérien (1926-1975)*. *Boletín de Literatura oral*, anejo 2 (2020): 14. DOI: 10.17561/blo.vanejo12 [fecha de consulta: 27/07/2022].

10 ÓSCAR ABENÓJAR SANJUÁN: «La anciana y el robo del fuego. Tipología y distribución de la variante del mito». *Boletín de Literatura oral* núm. 9 (2019): 13-34.

11 IGNAZIO E. BUTTITTA: *Il fuoco. Simbolismo e pratiche rituali*. Collana Nuovo Prisma. Palermo: Sellerio, 2002, p. 31; sobre la importancia de la dicotomía crudo/cocido en los cuentos populares, cf. JOSÉ MANUEL PEDROSA: «Lo crudo y lo cocido: teoría, símbolo, texto (de Lévi Strauss al cuento tradicional)». *Revista de Folklore* núm. 266 (2003): 39-54.

12 IGNAZIO E. BUTTITTA: *Il fuoco. Simbolismo e pratiche rituali*. Collana Nuovo Prisma. Palermo: Sellerio, 2002, p. 33.

El interés que encierra esta publicación se materializa en hacer accesibles nuevas versiones de distintos tipos de cuentos. Moscoso García los agrupa en cuatro secciones: la primera, como es costumbre, es la de los cuentos de animales (36 relatos, de los cuales muchos son dedicados al chacal); siguen los cuentos maravillosos y realistas (26 relatos de los que muy pocos merecen realmente el nombre de cuento maravilloso); en tercera posición se sitúa la sección de cuentos jocosos (únicamente dos); y cierra la recopilación la amplia sección de los cuentos con moral religiosa, en la que se incluyen 64 narraciones.

Otra de las aportaciones interesantes es el índice de voces con el que concluye el volumen. En él, Moscoso ha recogido los nombres de distintos elementos que aparecen en los cuentos (animales, personas, plantas, colores, religiones, etc.) y nos permite así hacer calas puntuales vinculadas a un determinado aspecto, elemento o personaje. Vemos, por tanto, que no todos los cuentos tienen personajes anónimos, sino que aparecen algunos personajes bíblicos (Adán, Job o el Rey Salomón, que es el protagonista de tres cuentos) o –y no podía ser de otra forma– tontos-sabios que, bajo distintos nombres, viven desde hace siglos en las narraciones de varios países del Mediterráneo, como Yuha o Bahlül.

Estamos ante una obra de gran relevancia para cualquier persona interesada en los cuentos orales y tradicionales, desde la perspectiva de la investigación, pero también desde la del simple lector que desea disfrutar de historias cuya pertenencia a una cultura determinada se conjuga con la universalidad propia de estos cuentos.

NOIA CAMPOS, Camiño: *Catalogue of Galician Folktales*. Folklore Fellows' Communications 322. Hèlsinki: The Kalevala Society, 2021, 318 p.

Catalogue of Galician Folktales

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Molt ha plogut d'ençà de la publicació l'any 1910 del *Verzeichnis der Märchentypen* d'Antti Aarne, l'índex d'arguments rondallístics elaborat a partir de l'aplec dels germans Grimm amb la inclusió d'un número i un títol per a l'argument de cada rondalla per facilitar-ne la identificació i comparació entre corpus rondallístics diversos, que va suposar un canvi respecte dels treballs realitzats fins aleshores. Revisat posteriorment per Stith Thompson en dues ocasions, els anys 1928 i 1961 (segona i tercera edició de *The Types of the Folktale* amb la identificació dels tipus rondallístics amb les sigles AaTh pels cognoms dels dos autors), i per Hans-Jörg Uther el 2004 en la seva edició actual (amb l'ús de les sigles ATU que identifica els tres autors), l'índex ha resultat ser «un utilíssim instrument de classificació que ha facilitat extraordinàriament els treballs sobre la narrativa oral, especialment els de rondallística comparada dins el mètode històrico-geogràfic», en paraules de Josep M. Pujol.¹ Si bé és cert que aquest índex (i el mateix mètode) presenta certs problemes (per la seva mateixa naturalesa), no hi ha cap dubte que, encara avui dia, es tracta d'una eina de treball imprescindible per estudiar les rondalles i que el seu caràcter internacionalista s'ha reforçat amb l'aparició de catàlegs que s'ocupen de corpus lingüístics concrets d'arreu del món tenint en compte aquest mateix sistema de classificació.

És en aquest context en el qual cal emmarcar la publicació del *Catalogue of Galician Folktales* dins la prestigiosa col·lecció Folklore Fellows' Communications de Hèlsinki (es tracta concretament del volum 322), actualment editada per la Kalevala Society.² L'autora del volum, Camiño Noia Campos, és professora emèrita de la Universitat de Vigo (Pontevedra) i ocupant la Càtedra de Literatura Gallega ha dedicat gran part de la seva recerca a recopilar, transcriure i estudiar rondalles gallegues. Ha difós la seva investigació sobre diversos aspectes dels contes orals gal·lecs en articles publicats en gallec, castellà i francès i prèviament al present catàleg havia publicat l'any 2002 els *Contos galegos de tradición oral*,³ base del *Catálogo tipológico do conto galego de tradición oral* del 2010. En aquest darrer cas, i seguint el plantejament de Julio Camarena i Maxime Chevalier al *Catálogo tipológico del*

1 Això era i no era. *Obra folklòrica de Josep M. Pujol*. Edició a cura de Carme ORIOL i Emili SAMPER. Tarragona: Universitat Rovira i Virgili, 2013, p. 245. La citació prové de la presentació de la «Contribució a l'índex de tipus de la rondalla catalana», tesi de llicenciatura de Josep M. Pujol de l'any 1982.

2 Aquesta col·lecció acull monografies del camps de la folklorística, la religió comparada, l'antropologia cultural i l'etnologia, i se centra en els aspectes no materials de la cultura tradicional, especialment la literatura oral, els sistemes de creences, el mite i el ritual, la metodologia i la història de la recerca. Des del 1910 va ser publicada per l'Academia Scientiarum Fennica (l'Acadèmia Finlandesa de Ciències i Lletres) i, a partir del 2021, l'editor n'és la Kalevala Society.

3 Amb dues edicions posteriors (el 2003 i el 2004) i una versió abreujada en espanyol (p. 17).

cuento folklórico español,⁴ Noia inclou un exemple concret de cada tipus rondallístic de manera que el volum, a més de funcionar com a catàleg, és una antologia de textos.

Com és lògic, el *Catalogue of Galician Folktales*, publicat ara en anglès, parteix de la feina prèvia feta en aquests catàlegs, als quals cal sumar-hi els materials procedents de l'Arquivo Galego de Narrativa Oral (AGANO), creat a principis del segle XXI i que compta amb les rondalles enregistrades pels estudiants de la Facultat de Filologia i de Traducció de la Universitat de Vigo. Les rondalles objecte d'estudi del llibre són les de l'àrea lingüística del gallec que inclou Galícia, però també localitats frontereres d'Astúries i Castella i Lleó, pertanyents des de l'edat mitjana al segle XVII al regne de Galícia, així com àrees lingüístiques localitzades a la província de Càceres, a Extremadura (concretament a Val de Xálima, Ellas) (p. 17). Per il·lustrar aquest fet, el llibre inclou al començament dos mapes: un de la península Ibèrica amb la indicació de les províncies gallegues i un altre de l'àrea lingüística gallega (p. 13).

A diferència del *Catálogo tipológico do conto galego de tradición oral*, en aquesta ocasió no s'inclou cap exemple complet de cada tipus i se segueix l'estructura habitual dels catàlegs rondallístics publicats en aquesta mateixa col·lecció, partint de la metodologia i organització dels catàlegs d'Antti Aarne i Stith Thompson, així com de la darrera versió revisada per Uther. D'aquesta manera, cada tipus (i subtipus) s'acompanya d'un resum en anglès de les versions gallegues, que n'il·lustren la fesomia, i de la informació bibliogràfica de les versions, entre les quals es troben les inèdites procedents de l'Arquivo Galego de Narrativa Oral, que s'identifiquen amb les sigles AGANO. En alguns dels tipus també hi apareix la referència a versions literàries de la rondalla, en una mostra de la fructífera relació existent entre la literatura oral i la literatura de creació per part dels escriptors. El catàleg parteix de l'índex tipològic del 2004 d'Uther,⁵ amb la identificació dels tipus amb les sigles ATU, però també recorre a altres catàlegs. Així, en aquells casos en els quals la versió en gallec es pot identificar amb alguns dels tipus d'Aarne i Thompson que han estat suprimits (o agrupats) en l'edició més recent d'Uther, es manté aquesta identificació amb el tipus AaTh.⁶ De la mateixa manera, per a les rondalles que no es poden catalogar segons aquests índexs (AaTh i ATU), però que sí tenen correlació amb altres catàlegs (com els de Boggs, Camarena i Chevalier, Cardigos i Correia, etc.), es dona aquesta classificació. Finalment, quan hi ha més d'una versió d'una mateixa rondalla que no es troba en cap d'aquests catàlegs, l'autora crea un nou tipus (o subtipus) que identifica amb la indicació «Noia».

4 Els dos primers volums, dedicats a les rondalles meravelloses i a les rondalles d'animals, es van publicar a Gredos l'any 1995 i 1997, respectivament. El tercer i el quart, corresponents a les rondalles religioses i als anomenats contes novel·la, els va publicar el Centro de Estudios Cervantinos el 2003. Recentment, l'any 2022, se n'ha publicat pòstumament el cinquè volum, dedicat a les rondalles del gegant beneit, a l'editorial Palabras del Candil, a cura d'un equip de folkloristes que ha continuat la tasca encetada per Camarena i Chevalier.

5 Hans-Jörg Uther: *The types of international folktales. A classification and bibliography based on the system of Antti Aarne and Stith Thompson*. Folklore Fellows' Communications 284-286. Hèlsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 2004.

6 Antti AARNE; Stith THOMPSON: *The types of the folktale*. Folklore Fellows' Communications 184. Hèlsinki: Suomalainen Tiedeakatemia, 1961.

Els objectius de l'autora en l'elaboració d'aquest volum són: despertar l'interès entre els propietaris del patrimoni literari oral perquè aquest es transmeti i es mantingui; posar a l'abast dels investigadors gallecs materials interessants per a la seva recerca, i, finalment, fer conèixer internacionalment la narrativa oral gallega (p. 19-20). Una obra d'aquestes característiques no es pot dur a terme només individualment, amb la qual cosa la llista d'agraïments que tanca la introducció del llibre (p. 20-21) resulta imprescindible. No es tracta de reproduir-la aquí, però sí que es podrien destacar dues aportacions concretes relacionades directament amb els objectius descrits anteriorment. D'una banda, l'agraïment als col·legues predecessors de Noia al Seminario de Estudos Galegos i, de l'altra, als membres del Grup de Recerca Europeu en Narrativa Oral (GRENO)⁷ que entre els anys 2003 i 2012 es van reunir de manera regular per estudiar, debatre i intercanviar opinions sobre les dificultats i els reptes de la catalogació de les rondalles i altres gèneres narratius.⁸

En una obra d'aquestes característiques no hi poden faltar, a més de la pertinent bibliografia,⁹ els índexs que han de permetre i facilitar la consulta dels tipus rondallístics. Així, a la part final del llibre es poden consultar els tipus complementaris a ATU (p. 275), és a dir, els tipus d'altres catàlegs utilitzats en la catalogació de les rondalles gallegues (AaTh, Boggs, Camarena i Chevalier, Cardigos i Correia, González Sanz, etc.) entre els quals es troben els que proposa l'autora (Noia),¹⁰ l'índex alfabètic dels tipus (p. 281) i un índex general (p. 297) amb les paraules clau que facilita la identificació dels tipus a partir del títol i el resum.

Com s'ha dit, i seguint el model dels catàlegs que tenen en compte un corpus rondallístic determinat, el resum inclòs a cada tipus correspon a les versions gallegues i no ha de coincidir, estrictament, amb el resum genèric que es pot consultar al catàleg d'Uther. Això permet a l'investigador acarar aquestes versions amb les d'altres corpus i facilita, per tant, els estudis comparatius. En aquest sentit, resulta molt interessant que dins d'aquest mateix resum o amb la indicació explícita de «Remarks» l'autora inclogui sovint comentaris sobre aquestes rondalles, com ara possibles combinacions amb altres tipus, característiques d'aquelles versions i, sobretot, què fa diferent les versions gallegues respecte de l'índex internacional. Es tracta, sens dubte, de tot un encert i és una bona mostra del coneixement que té l'autora del corpus estudiat. Vegem-ne a continuació alguns exemples, a mode il·lustratiu.

En el tipus ATU 310 *The Maiden in the Tower (Rapunzel)* no hi consten versions orals, però en canvi sí de literàries. L'autora assenyala que aquestes darreres deuen provenir, però, de versions orals del segle XIX recollides a Ourense (p. 59). En algunes ocasions s'han inclòs tipus sobre conegudes rondalles que no ens han

7 També denominat Grupo de Reflexión Europeo sobre Narrativa Oral (GRENO), European Research Group on Oral Narrative (ERGON) i Groupe de Recherche Européen sur les Narrations Orales (GRENO).

8 La darrera trobada del grup, dedicada al tema «Al voltant de les rondalles: les formes breus de la narrativa oral», es va celebrar a la Universitat Rovira i Virgili de Tarragona a finals de l'octubre del 2012, en homenatge a Josep M. Pujol, mort uns mesos abans.

9 Dividida, en aquest cas, en índexs i catàlegs, fonts primàries de les rondalles gallegues, reculls de rondalles d'altres corpus lingüístics, obres genèriques sobre l'estudi de la narrativa oral i, finalment, revistes amb textos gallecs inclosos a AGANO.

10 Amb un total de trenta-nou tipus.

arribat per transmissió oral sinó precisament per via escrita a partir de col·leccions d'altres cultures. És el cas, per exemple, dels tipus ATU 327A *Hansel and Gretel* (p. 62-63) o dels tipus ATU 510A *Cinderella* (p. 75) i ATU 709 *Snow White* (p. 87). En aquests exemples, no ens trobem davant de rondalles que provenguin de la tradició gallega sinó de rondalles conegudes a partir dels reculls publicats pels germans Grimm. Un cas similar seria el del tipus ATU 333 *Little Red Riding Hood*. En aquest cas, les versions registrades en territori gallec són en espanyol (p. 65).

Algunes de les rondalles catalogades presenten característiques pròpies de la cultura gallega, com pot ser l'aparició de personatges o éssers característics. És el cas del tipus ATU 405 *Jorinde and Joringel* en què apareix una *moura* (bruixa). A diferència del tipus descrit al catàleg d'Uther, en aquest cas no es tracta d'una història d'amor (p. 67). Un altre exemple seria el *tardo*, un ésser de la mitologia gallega, semblant a un petit *goblin*. Conegut amb diversos noms (*tártalo*, *demiño*, *targo*, *trasno*), es presenta en forma d'animal, especialment de cavall, ase o ovella, i també ho pot fer en forma humana, tal com es pot veure als tipus de Boggs *762 *The Devil ("Tardo") Turned into a Horse (Donkey)* (p. 101) i 831*B, D *Apparitions of the goblin* (p. 113) o al tipus ATU 1172 *All Stones from the Stream or the Field* (p. 146).

Un dels aspectes més problemàtics a l'hora d'estudiar i classificar els textos narratius és la distinció, no sempre clara, entre rondalla i llegenda. Tot i ser un catàleg de rondalles, l'autora té en compte aquesta relació i ho explicita en determinats moments. Així, al tipus ATU 711 *The Beautiful and the Ugly Twin Sisters* explica com les versions gallegues d'aquesta rondalla s'han cristianitzat i han esdevingut llegendes. Argumentalment, en aquestes versions no hi ha encantament ni boda (ni tampoc apareix l'episodi inicial característic del tipus) i la transformació es deu a un miracle (p. 88). De manera similar, al relat simbòlic que explica la mort de gent jove que es troba al tipus 335*A *The Flower (Tree) of Death (Life)*, proposat per l'autora (amb la indicació Noia), s'especifica que es tracta d'una versió del tipus ATU 335 i que pot aparèixer en forma de llegenda relacionada amb un espai geogràfic concret (p. 65). Precisament altres tipus proposats per l'autora en reculls anteriors han estat utilitzats per altres catalogadors en les seves obres, en una mostra més de la utilitat d'aquest sistema a l'hora d'identificar versions de la mateixa rondalla en corpus lingüístics diversos. És el cas del tipus 843C *Necessity Helps*, una rondalla didàctica que explica com hem de resoldre les dificultats. Al *Catálogo tipológico del cuento folclórico en Murcia* d'Ángel Hernández apareixen tres versions espanyoles catalogades sota aquest tipus de Noia (p. 115).¹¹ El mateix passa amb el tipus 1351*B *"The Child Has Already Got Teeth"* (p. 159) també proposat per Noia. Al tipus ATU 785A *The Goose with One Leg* l'autora fa notar com les versions gallegues i portugueses no són relats religiosos (p. 105), tot i pertànyer a aquest tipus que s'inclou dins les rondalles religioses de l'índex internacional.

Com s'ha comentat, en algunes ocasions es recorre a la classificació de l'índex d'Aarne i Thompson (AaTh) i no a la darrera revisió d'Uther (ATU). Aquesta decisió no és casual sinó que respon al fet que aquestes rondalles gallegues s'identifiquen més clarament amb el tipus AaTh i no amb el tipus ATU. Un exemple el trobem al tipus AaTh 1365D* *Which Shall Eat the Third Egg*. En la darrera revisió de l'índex (Uther), el tipus s'ha inclòs dins del miscel·lànic 1365E, però es tracta

¹¹ Publicat el 2013 dins la Biblioteca de Literatura Oral y Cultura Popular d'El Jardín de la Voz, es troba disponible en línia a l'adreça <<http://hdl.handle.net/10017/19842>> [data de consulta: agost de 2022].

d'una rondalla coneguda dins l'àrea galaicoportuguesa en la forma descrita al tipus d'AaTh i per això es manté aquest mateix tipus i no el corresponent a ATU (p. 165).

Finalment, el tipus ATU 2010 *Ehod mi yodea* (*One; Who Knows?*) sí que inclou una part del text de la rondalla. Es tracta d'una oració per prevenir la possessió d'ànimes per part del diable, oració habitual en les comunitats rurals gallegues. L'autora indica que s'han catalogat sota aquest tipus les versions precedides per un relat exemplar (p. 245).

El *Catalogue of Galician Folktales* de Camiño Noia compleix, amb escreix, els objectius plantejats. El corpus rondallístic gallec ja comptava des de feia anys, i de mà de la mateixa autora, d'estudis i catàlegs que posaven en relació la tradició oral gallega amb la recerca rondallística internacional. Amb l'aparició d'aquest catàleg en anglès es dona un pas més i es posa a l'abast de qualsevol lector aquesta tradició, seguint els paràmetres acadèmics pertinents i facilitant, així, els estudis comparatius, seguint la llavor plantada per Antti Aarne el 1910 i continuada fins a dia d'avui per folkloristes d'arreu del món.

ROS, Roser: *Manual d'oralitat en set jornades i set contes*. Barcelona: Tantàgora, 2020, 148 p.

Manual d'oralitat en set jornades i set contes

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Fa aproximadament trenta anys de l'aparició dels primers narradors i narradores orals professionals a casa nostra. De manera sovint autodidacta i molt intuïtiva, aquests artistes han convertit l'art verbal en una art escènica amb relats de tot tipus (d'origen popular però també provinents de la literatura escrita), una presència escenogràfica senzilla i una relació molt directa amb el públic que els escolta. Aquests espectacles de petit format han esdevingut una part essencial de les campanyes de promoció i animació lectora de biblioteques i centres educatius, així com de programacions culturals per a públic adult. A més a més, la narració oral professional ha portat a terme una important tasca de difusió i posada en valor dels diferents gèneres etnopoètics, especialment rellevants pel que fa a la rondalla. Aquest gènere, que avui en dia difícilment aflora de manera espontània en el seu context comunicatiu original, ha trobat una segona vida en la boca i les orelles dels nous narradors i les persones que han crescut al caliu d'aquestes velles i noves històries.

Entre aquesta generació de pioners de la narració oral professional cal destacar Roser Ros i Vilanova, l'autora del *Manual d'oralitat en set jornades i set contes*, objecte d'aquesta ressenya. Aquesta pedagoga, escriptora i narradora és una de les fundadores de l'Associació de Narradores i Narradors, ANIN¹ i ha format part del consell redactor de dos revistes dedicades a la narració oral: *Revista n²* i *Tantàgora*.³ Aquestes publicacions són, però, una excepció, ja que els estudis i les reflexions teòriques sobre aquest ofici no són gaire abundants. Entre les obres publicades sobre el tema en l'àmbit català, cal destacar *Setzevoltes (recull de contes per narrar)*, de Teresa Duran i Núria Ventura, del 1979; *Contes per parlar. Una proposta de treball per a la immersió a parvulari* de P. Foré, del 1991; *Manual del rondallaire*, escrit l'any 1996 per Eulàlia Bullich i Mercè Maure, i els *Contes de l'altra riba. Manual del rondallaire intercultural* de Montserrat Cendra, del 2012. També podem esmentar els textos dedicats a la rondalla que formen part del volum *Paraula viva. Articles sobre literatura oral*, recopilats per Caterina Valriu el 2008, o *Més contes, per favor!*, de Gemma Lluch, Joan Portell i Llorenç Giménez, del 2014. La mateixa Roser Ros és autora d'altres escrits sobre aquest tema com «De la falda a la rondalla» en *Primeres literatures. Llegir abans de saber llegir* de 1995 i *Conte ve, mentida va. Una proposta didàctica de literatura oral per a cicle superior de primària i ESO* de 2009.

Aquestes publicacions sobre com contar contes van ser analitzades per Caterina Valriu en l'article «Mujeres que cuentan como contar: manuales de narración oral», publicat per la UNED l'any 2017 al volum col·lectiu *Mujeres de palabra: ge-*

¹ ANIN va ser fundada a Barcelona l'any 1998.

² *Revista n*, editada per l'associació ANIN. Associació de Narradores i Narradors <<http://www.anincat.org/revis-ta-n/>> [data de consulta: juliol de 2022].

³ *Tantàgora. Revista de literatura oral* <<http://revistatantagora.net/>> [data de consulta: juliol de 2022].

nero y narración oral en voz femenina. En aquest sentit cal assenyalar que l'obra de referència per a la resta de títols és *How to Tell Stories to Children* de Sara C. Bryant publicat el 1904. Amb la publicació d'aquest primer manual es manifesta la necessitat creixent de bibliotequeres i docents de millorar la seua capacitat de contar contes fora de l'àmbit familiar. Des de principis del segle xx, biblioteques i escoles nord-americanes implementen l'*storytime* o l'hora del conte i aquesta activitat s'estén progressivament per Europa i l'Amèrica Llatina.

En l'àmbit hispànic cal destacar *Pues señor... Cómo debe contarse el cuento y Cuentos para ser contados* d'Elena Fortún, del 1941; *La aventura de oír. Cuentos tradicionales y literatura infantil* d'Ana Pelegrín, del 1982; *El arte de narrar, un oficio olvidado*, del 1989, de Dora Pastoriza de Etchebarne; *Cuentos contados* de Montserrat del Amo, del 2006, i alguns volums de la col·lecció «En teoría» de l'editorial Palabras del Candil. En aquestes obres, tot i les diferències geogràfiques, d'enfocament o estil, es constaten una sèrie d'elements comuns.

Primerament, en totes s'hi presenten indicacions per a contar contes de viva veu, sovint adreçades a mestres o en relació amb el món dels infants. També hi solen aparèixer apunts sobre els recursos orals que ha d'emprar un bon narrador, així com la relació entre escriptura i oralitat i propostes pràctiques per a aplicar aquests fonaments teòrics. Pel que fa al repertori, també és una constant la referència a la literatura popular, especialment a rondalles i llegendes i l'existència d'un apartat específic de contes adaptats per les autores per a ser contats oralment.

A grans trets, el *Manual d'oralitat en set jornades i set contes* es pot considerar com una de les darreres contribucions a aquest corrent. Així, el manual escrit per Roser Ros, manté i reinterpreta gran part de les seccions i temes esmentats. A través d'un estil ben personal, l'autora presenta una sèrie d'aspectes de la narració oral d'històries que elabora a partir de la seua pròpia experiència com a narradora. Consegüentment, l'objectiu fonamental d'aquesta obra és compartir experiències i reflexions sobre l'art d'explicar històries.

L'autora ha triat una sèrie de personatges amb qui conversa al llarg de l'obra per a introduir els continguts en forma de diàleg. Per una banda, trobem la personificació de l'Oïda, la Memòria i la Veu en el cos de tres velletes que comencen un viatge que dura (i no per casualitat) set jornades. D'altra banda, trobem la senyora Comunicació Artística en Petit Grup o senyora CAenPG que assisteix i de vegades també dialoga amb l'autora sobre els esdeveniments ocorreguts al llarg de l'obra.

Respecte a l'estructura del llibre, cal distingir dues parts diferenciades. Per un costat tenim una primera part en què es comparteixen les bases i els aspectes fonamentals del que l'autora defineix en primera instància com a «oralitat». En canvi, la segona part està dedicada a set contes mitjançant els quals es pretén «oferir materials verbals confegits a través de l'escriptura [...] aptes per ser llegits i, en un procés d'adopció personal, aptes, també per ser explicats».

Per tant, segons la mateixa autora, l'oralitat és el tema fonamental d'aquesta primera part que, a la vegada, s'organitza en un primer capítol introductori, set capítols o jornades i un darrer apartat anomenat «Per acabar» amb exercicis pràctics. A propòsit del capítol introductori, Roser Ros ofereix diferents mots i conceptes que s'han utilitzat habitualment com a sinònims per a fer referència a un mateix tema: oralitat, folklore, literatura oral, literatura tradicional i, en darrera instància, comunicació artística en petit grup. Ara bé, encara que freqüentment

aquests mots s'utilitzen com a equivalents, cada paraula correspon a concepcions del tema desenvolupades en èpoques i escoles diferents.

Si comencem pel terme «oralitat», que apareix en el títol de l'obra, és definit per l'autora com: «una terra que és per a mi bressol de la bona llengua, un sistema primari anterior a qualsevol codi escrit, immaterial i efímer que habita en el cos del parlant i s'expandeix cap a l'exterior fins a atènyer un oient» (p. 10). En canvi, el concepte d'«oralitat» és molt més ampli i abasta altres tipus de comunicació que poc tenen a veure amb la narració oral d'un conte, que és el tema que es desenvolupa al llarg de l'obra. En aquesta línia, la mateixa autora fa referència al concepte de «literatura oral», més proper a la narració oral d'històries, però que també inclou altres gèneres i formes d'interacció que depassen aquesta matèria. Per posar un exemple, podem parlar dels audiolibres.

Un altre dels termes utilitzats per Ros és el de «literatura tradicional». En aquest cas, és la paraula «tradicional», ja qüestionada per folkloristes com Jan H. Brunvand, Barre Toelken i posteriorment també pel folklorista català Josep M. Pujol, que suposa un entrebanc. Així, la «tradicionalitat» d'un acte comunicatiu és considerada per aquests autors com un atribut constatable però no imprescindible.

Finalment i per complementar aquestes definicions, l'autora proposa el concepte de «comunicació artística en petit grup», creat pel folklorista nord-americà Dan Ben-Amos i introduït a Catalunya per Pujol. Aquesta concepció del folklore com a acte comunicatiu i artístic que es fixa en el procés de comunicació i no només en el text, és una de les aportacions teòriques més importants que s'ha produït en el món del folklore i l'etnopoètica en els darrers anys.

Això no obstant, tot i que s'ha generat un important canvi de perspectiva respecte a l'objecte d'estudi del folklore, el seu ús i aplicació fora de l'àmbit acadèmic és encara prou restringit. Així passa en el sector de la narració oral professional de l'àmbit cultural català i espanyol. Sovint, el creixent interès per la literatura popular dels narradors s'ha focalitzat en temes més clàssics i centrats en el text, com els sistemes internacionals de catalogació de rondalles o l'aplicació artística de conceptes com «tipus», «versió» o «motiu».

És per això que resulta especialment remarcable que Roser Ros haja introduït el concepte de «comunicació artística en petit grup» en aquest manual de narració, adaptant i difonent aquesta aportació al món de la narració de contes. La senyora CAenPG juntament amb les tres velletes —Oïda, Memòria i Veu— són presentades per l'autora com a metàfora de cadascun dels elements necessaris per practicar l'oralitat i acompanyaran el lector al llarg de les set jornades que es corresponen amb els següents set capítols d'aquesta primera part de l'obra.

Aquest tractament metafòric que amara tot el *Manual d'Oraltat*, ens porta fortes reminiscències d'altres obres vinculades a la narració d'històries. Cada capítol es correspon amb una jornada i cada jornada amb un tema i/o història. Això ens recorda *El Decameró*, *Les mil i una nits* o els *Contes de Canterbury*. A més a més, les jornades són set, ni una més ni una menys, ja que el set és un dels números més simbòlics i assenyalats de les rondalles. Per acabar, el lloc en el qual transcorre l'obra és un hostal en què les velletes seuen al costat d'uns joves que s'expliquen històries els uns als altres. I els hostals, que són espais de trobada per a viatgers i desconeguts, sempre han sigut també un lloc per explicar històries. En el folklore de l'àmbit cultural català trobem unes quantes rondalles que tenen lloc a hostals o que són protagonitzades per hostalers. En són un bon exemple: «L'hostal del

llamp», recopilada per Joan Amades; «València és bona / però el maset del meu pare és mellor», recol·lectada per Sara Llorens, o «Lo que diuen es galls, en cantar» d'Antoni Maria Alcover.

Pel que fa als temes tractats al llarg de les jornades, Ros comença per remarcar la importància de les històries, «el poder de la paraula». Al llarg d'aquesta primera jornada, les velletes arriben a l'hostal i, en escoltar els joves contar anècdotes, es presenten i els expliquen la importància dels relats per a recordar experiències passades: «La vida ens proporciona un material inesgotable —va xiuxiuejar la Veu—. Hi ha una narració per a cada ocasió. I cadascú l'explica i se l'explica a la seva manera» (p. 31). A més, incideixen en com aquestes històries es conformen, en una barreja entre realitat i ficció en què l'oient posa en marxa el seu propi imaginari, i en conseqüència la història es construeix gràcies les imatges provinents de les seues experiències.

A la segona jornada, l'autora se centra en les rondalles i en com aquests relats acompanyen els éssers humans des de la infantesa fins a l'edat adulta. Posa l'exemple del personatge del llop ferotge i del seu simbolisme, associat als números —de nou el número set, però també el tres— als espais i les accions que es porten a terme dins de cada rondalla.

La tercera jornada es dedica als embarbussaments, entesos per les velletes com «fitness oral» que serveix per a mantenir la llengua oral en bon estat. Per la seua banda, la quarta jornada fa referència a les versions i a com cada vegada que es conta un conte es genera una versió amb variacions que poden afectar-ne el contingut, l'estructura però també el to i la velocitat. Introdueix el concepte de «guió», entès com l'argument o «els elements despallats» (p. 56) que són indispensables per a construir una versió pròpia. Així, en la preparació de la narració oral d'una història, l'element indispensable és el guió de la història i no la memorització d'una versió concreta. A la cinquena jornada, les velletes reciten un conte de Tolstoi que els serveix per a presentar altres gèneres i formes de contar, en aquest cas relacionades amb recursos poètics com el ritme o la rima. La sisena jornada parla de la importància del símbol en les rondalles, que comparteix un llenguatge metafòric i universal amb els somnis. Precisament a la setena jornada, la senyora CaenPG fa referència a la imaginació com a concepte central dins del món de la narració d'històries: realitat i imaginació són primordials i es necessiten mútuament. És a través de la paraula que aquesta imaginació pren forma, gràcies a les imatges creades per la ment amb la seva ajuda. Aquesta manera de crear representa el pensament divergent, tan necessari en el món actual.

Per finalitzar aquesta primera part del *Manual d'Oralitat*, Roser Ros presenta un darrer apartat dedicat a una sèrie d'aspectes de l'oralitat amb exercicis que es basen en la importància de practicar per millorar la competència oral: la invenció, la disposició, l'elocució i la memòria. Aquests exercicis culminen en un breu diàleg entre la Comunicació Artística i l'autora. Paga la pena reproduir les paraules que utilitza la mateixa senyora CAenPG per a definir-se:

Soc un munt de paraules i gestos que, mitjançant la veu, el cos, la proximitat i el moviment arriben a altres individus en una acció performativa, improvisada i artística. Performativa, ja que mai més es tornarà a repetir de la mateixa manera; improvisada perquè l'emissor, experimentat, sap quan i com dur-la a terme en funció del context; artística per original, innovadora, personal i intransferible (p. 93).

Així mateix, aquest diàleg continua al llarg de la segona part del llibre, ja que l'autora ens presenta set contes que ha triat especialment per a ser explicats oralment i que comenta posteriorment amb el personatge de la Comunicació Artística. Abans de la narració dels contes pròpiament dita, l'autora ofereix unes breus nocions sobre aquests relats en què insisteix en la idea de la dimensió estètica dels contes, en la seva antiguitat i en la utilització del llenguatge simbòlic com algunes de les seues característiques més importants. Amb referència als contes triats, crida l'atenció que es tracta d'un repertori prou variat en què trobem contes propis, versions de contes d'altres autors, així com contes populars de diferents tradicions com «El llop i la guineu» o «La Caputxeta Vermella». Potser aquesta tria resultaria poc ortodoxa per a un folklorista, però té molt de sentit si entenem que precisament per a la narració oral si la història ens resulta interessant, fàcil d'adaptar i funciona amb el públic, poc importa quin n'és l'origen.

En definitiva, aquest *Manual d'oralitat* es presenta com un llibre adient per a totes aquelles persones interessades en la narració oral d'històries; té una sòlida fonamentació que prové, en primera instància, de l'experiència de Roser Ros com a narradora. A més, l'autora és capaç d'integrar un bagatge teòric que contribueix a difondre les darreres aportacions en l'àmbit dels estudis etnopoètics. Però, sobretot, aquest llibre transmet una estima i un respecte molt grans cap al desconegut ofici i art de contar històries de viva veu.

SAGRERA ANTICH, Bàrbara: *Corpus de fraseologia de les Illes Balears. Classificació, descripció i contextualització*. Manacor: Edicions Mondellibres, abril 2019, segona edició: octubre 2019, 786 p.

Corpus de fraseologia de les Illes Balears. Classificació, descripció i contextualització

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La fraseologia entesa com a disciplina lingüística ha merescut a hores d'ara l'interès de nombrosos especialistes des de llengües molt diverses, amb aportacions teòriques i pràctiques que han ajudat a evolucionar i aprofundir en el coneixement del fet fraseològic. Una de les raons d'aquest interès —i no és la menor— és que el fenomen es produeix en totes les llengües del món: un fet lingüístic universal i alhora privatiu de cada llengua, que enriqueix i sedimenta traces culturals del poble que la parla.

Bàrbara Sagrera, l'autora del llibre que ressenyem, ho ha entès així i, amb gran coratge i bona preparació, ha confeccionat un corpus fraseològic amb l'objectiu de fer un treball descriptiu i representatiu de les Illes Balears, alhora que fa una contribució als estudis fraseològics des del punt de vista lingüístic i antropològic.

Efectivament, el treball de Sagrera conté quatre capítols introductoris en què presenta una anàlisi exhaustiva del material que recull, aplicant els principis teòricopràctics de la fraseologia i incorporant la dimensió folklòrica, encara que per això ha hagut de restringir el concepte d'unitat fraseològica (o *unitat fràsica*, UF), perquè «no tot allò fraseològic és comunicació folklòrica», com molt bé diu.

Al primer capítol, Sagrera tracta d'aspectes terminològics, sobretot delimita el concepte d'UF atenent les característiques de repetició, fixació, idiomaticitat, alta freqüència d'ús, gradualitat, etc., a partir d'autors com Zuloaga, Corpas i Ruiz Gurillo. Paral·lelament, introdueix un aspecte nou, la consideració folklòrica, i ho fa a partir de l'aplicació de cinc condicions establertes per Roviró,¹ que segueix les tesis de Josep M. Pujol; condicions que, resumides, són: subjectivitat, recreació, coneixement compartit entre emissor i receptor, utilització en grup i superació d'un obstacle. L'autora en fa una aplicació detallada i exemplificada amb UF i arriba a la conclusió que aquestes característiques s'acompleixen en un gran nombre d'UF, però no en totes. Així, Sagrera afirma que la dimensió folklòrica no afecta les locucions prepositives i conjuntives, les col·locacions ni les fórmules rutinàries; per això, les deixa fora de l'anàlisi, encara que les inclou en el corpus. També queden fora de l'anàlisi les parèmies, perquè, segons diu: «Hem considerat que existeixen avui estudis prou importants que deixen poques llacunes». I en la nota 13 afegeix: «Ens referim a l'extensa bibliografia sobre aquest tema d'estudiosos com Maria Conca o Josep Guia entre d'altres» (p. 27). Tanmateix, hauria estat ben interessant que Sagrera hagués emprès la tasca d'analitzar parèmies, precisament per les connotacions antropològiques i culturals que contenen.

¹ Ignasi ROVIRÓ: «El folklore i les formes col·loquials de comunicació». Dins *Els gèneres etnopoètics. Competència i actuació*. Grup d'Estudis Etnopoètics de la Societat Catalana de Llengua i Literatura. Arxiu de Tradicions de l'Alguer, 2007, p. 117-131.

Al segon capítol, l'estudiosa informa de les fonts utilitzades per a la confecció i la selecció del corpus: el *Cançoner popular de Mallorca* de Rafael Guinardó, el *Diccionari català-valencià-balear* d'Antoni Maria Alcover i Francesc de Borja Moll, els 24 volums de rondalles recopilades per Antoni Maria Alcover, les rondalles d'Eivissa i les de Formentera recopilades per Joan Castelló Guasc, les rondalles de Mallorca recopilades per l'Arxiduc Lluís Salvador, les rondalles de Menorca recopilades per Andreu Ferrer Ginard i les rondalles de Menorca recopilades per Francesc Camps i Mercadal. Es tracta d'un corpus que parteix de fons escrites que tenen el seu origen en l'oralitat, cosa que legitima les UF i les fa aptes per a figurar en un compendi fraseològic. El nostre criteri en aquest punt és ben clar,² ja que les UF, precisament per la seva complexitat significativa, cal que siguin estudiades en context. No n'hi ha prou a conèixer la forma i el significat d'una UF aïllada sinó que cal saber-la identificar i interpretar en les diverses situacions comunicatives en què pot ser intertextualitzada. A més, trobar en context les UF és una garantia d'ús.

En la selecció del corpus, Sagrera s'hi ha ajustat al criteri suara esmentat, ja que parteix d'obres que han estat recopilades des de l'oralitat i que insereixen les UF en situacions comunicatives reals. Ella justifica la tria de la següent manera: «les obres seleccionades constitueixen un testimoni fidel del parlar genuí de la societat de final del segle XIX i començament del XX. Són textos exempts d'impureses lingüístiques que resten al marge de la incorporació de castellanismes [...]. Els recopiladors posen per escrit, de manera més o menys fidel, el testimoni oral, una producció anònima confiada durant anys a la memòria, transmesa de pares a fills» (p. 32). Pel que fa al DCVB, en reivindica el valor antropològic al costat del filològic. I, tant en el treball de camp com en la documentació escrita referida a les UF, hi destaca el rigor filològic i etnogràfic que traspua cada article. Efectivament, el DCVB és una font objectiva i fiable pel que fa a la inclusió d'UF i, per tant, molt recomanable per a la consulta de l'usuari: no decep mai, introdueix marques diatòpiques en moltes ocasions, fa definicions acurades, afegeix informacions culturals, aporta documentació erudita o de fonts, posa variants si n'hi ha, etc. L'únic problema és l'organització de les UF, que no totes s'encabeixen en l'entrada *Loc.* (locució) o *Refr.* (refrany), però hi són. I cal buscar-les en el cos general de l'article, en què apareixen destacades en negreta. Així doncs, Sagrera ha fet ben fet d'incorporar les UF del DCVB al seu corpus, classificant-les i facilitant-ne la localització. Tot i això, de ben segur que s'hi ha trobat amb problemes que ha hagut de resoldre. Per exemple, un d'aquests és el de les marques diatòpiques que no sempre hi acompanyen les UF. Sagrera, en aquests casos, ha tingut en compte que apareguessin a les rondalles (mallorquines, menorquines o eivissenques) i al cançoner, o que continguessin marques dialectals illenques. Tot i això, diu l'autora «n'apareixien moltes, d'expressions, sense cap marca identificadora i hem optat per incloure-les entenent que formen part del patrimoni compartit». En aquests casos, i també en molts d'altres, hauria calgut discriminar per quines àrees geogràfiques són compartides i si, en definitiva, pertanyen al patrimoni general de la llengua catalana, però l'autora també ix al pas d'aquesta limitació dient que «sempre poden ser objecte d'un estudi futur més acurat que ajudi a confirmar-ne la procedència» (p. 47).

2 Maria CONCA; Josep GUIA: *La fraseologia. Principis, mètode i aplicacions*. Cap. III «Les unitats fràsiques en context». València: Bromera/Institut Interuniversitari de Filologia Valenciana, 2014.

Al tercer capítol, Bàrbara Sagrera s'ocupa de la classificació de les UF documentades al corpus i ho fa seguint les pautes ja establertes per Zuluaga i Corpas,³ separant les unitats que formen enunciats complets (parèmies, enunciats de valor específic i fórmules) de les que tenen valor sintagmàtic i no constitueixen enunciats complets (locucions nominals, adjectives, adverbials, verbals, prepositives i conjuntives). Aquesta classificació és senzilla i, en general es revela productiva, però l'estudiós, a l'hora d'extraure les UF d'un corpus literari per elaborar un corpus fràsic, pot trobar dificultats perquè les fronteres entre unes unitats i unes altres són difuses. I, si a això hi afegim que moltes vegades les UF apareixen desautomatitzades o que hi ha sintagmes lliures, repetits en el corpus i creats per l'autor (unitats estilístiques) a imitació de les UF, no hi ha més remei que procedir amb mètode.⁴ Sagrera no en parla del mètode seguit per localitzar i extreure les UF del corpus rondallístic utilitzat, però de ben segur que la tasca no haurà estat gens fàcil, encara que, en ser un tipus de text que parteix de l'oral, potser el fenomen de desautomatització o d'aparició d'unitats estilístiques és menys probable.

Al capítol quart, l'autora fa una anàlisi exhaustiva dels tipus d'UF del corpus rondallístic, des dels punts de vista estructural, funcional, formal, semàntic i pragmàtic, exceptuant-ne les parèmies, com ja havia advertit. Així doncs, el criteri estructural permet atribuir a una UF una categoria sintàctica, el funcional aporta informació sobre el context gramatical a partir del qual es pot assignar una funció a la UF, el formal vincula la UF amb la funció estètica, el semàntic permet mesurar el grau d'idiomaticitat i el pragmàtic associa el significat a un context determinat.

L'autora aplica l'anàlisi estructural i funcional a enunciats de valor específic, locucions nominals, adjectives, adverbials i verbals. Per a les locucions nominals, que identifiquen una o més entitats o nocions, presenta les estructures documentades en el corpus, amb exemples:

- substantiu + adjectiu: *Cap esflorat; Fòtil mort.*
- adjectiu + substantiu: *Una trista gràcia; Un mal trenc.*
- substantiu + SP: *Cap de fil; Engan de mitges.*
- substantiu + substantiu: *Ast i olla; Quatre jans i un boi.*
- infinitiu + infinitiu: *Bufar i fer ampolles; Arribar i moldre.*

Quant a les funcions, destaca que formen part d'una estructura oracional superior i exerceixen les mateixes funcions que un substantiu o un sintagma nominal, per exemple de complement directe (CD):

Se casaren; el Rei tirà sa casa per sa finestra; hi hagué un ast i olla de lo més alt de punt.
(*Sa fia des carboneret*)

Així mateix, explica que és molt freqüent que una mateixa locució aparegui sempre associada a un verb o a una preposició. És el cas de *Cas de casos*: «cas extraordinari, conjunt de circumstàncies excepcionals» (DCVB), que apareix sempre precedit de la preposició *per* de manera que constitueix un sintagma preposicional en funció de complement circumstancial (CC):

3 Alberto ZULUAGA: *Introducción al estudio de las expresiones fijas*. Frankfurt am Main, Verlag Peter D. Lang, 1980; Gloria CORPAS: *Manual de fraseología española*. Madrid: Gredos, 1997.

4 Maria CONCA; Josep GUIA: *La fraseologia. Principis, mètode i aplicacions*. Cap. III «Les unitats fràsiques en context». València: Bromera/Institut Interuniversitari de Filologia Valenciana, 2014, p. 105-115.

Se treu unes corretges que tenia per un cas de casos, i agafa aquell bigarniu seu.

(Gregori Papa)

També són freqüents les locucions que apareixen associades al verb *ser* i funcionen, per tant, com a atribut:

I no sabia dir que no a res que li demanassen, al punt va ésser s'escala d'encortinar d'es majordom.
(S'infant que feia vuit)

L'anàlisi formal respon, segons Sagrera, a la voluntat de reivindicar-ne el valor estètic, ja que les figures retòriques poden afectar la forma externa dels mots, la sintaxi o la semàntica. De tots tres aspectes, n'apareixen mostres representatives al llarg del corpus, que l'autora exemplifica:

Al·literació: *Sense cap ni peus; De cap a cap; A carta cabal; A poc a poc; etc.*

Similicadència: *Capell alt, braç sonant i orella fumant; Un tres i no res; A l'hora d'ara; etc.*

Rima: *Correr de la Xeca a la Meca; etc.*

Així mateix, presta una atenció especial a les figures retòriques que actuen sobre el significat:

Antonomàsia: *Posar-se fet un Nero; Estar fet un Llàcer; etc.*

Metàfora: *Tenir la Seu plena d'ous; Tenir el paladar enrajolat; etc.*

Ironia: *A una altra porta en donen dos; Fiar-se* (de quelcom o d'algu) *com d'unes cases que cauen; etc.*

L'anàlisi semàntica la porta a afirmar que «El caràcter fraseològic de les unitats no depèn únicament del grau en què posseeixen aquesta propietat [la idiomàticitat]. Les unitats, tant si són de significat fàcilment deduïble com no, han esdevingut fraseològiques perquè el procés diacrònic a què han estat sotmeses ha tingut com a conseqüència, a més de la fixació estructural, la incorporació de nous trets semàntics addicionals provinents de les vicissituds d'aquella expressió i dels seus usuaris [...]. En aquest sentit, podem dir que les UF s'han lexicalitzat i en aquest procés han adquirit una dimensió semàntica molt més complexa que l'allunya del significat estrictament denotatiu» (p. 91).

Bàrbara Sagrera revisa els aspectes que intervenen en la configuració de la idiomàticitat amb exemples del seu corpus, com és la presència de mots diacrítics o isolats, que només es troben inserits en UF: *A la biorxa* 'A la torta' (Mall., Men.) (DCVB); *A betzef* 'En gran quantitat, abundantment' (Mall., Men., Eiv.) (DCVB); la presència de mots d'una altra llengua històrica: *Dir es tu autem; Fer-ne una de pòpulo bàrbaro; etc.*; les deformacions fòniques: *Perdre el Kirieleison; Fer trescalamena; etc.*; les irregularitats gramaticals: *Posar emperons; Fer es perquè*, o les referències a fets històrics o culturals: *Enviar a Liorna; Anar d'Herodes a Pilat; etc.* I considera que els casos esmentats són significatius, però quantitativament poc importants al costat de la gran quantitat d'UF, l'opacitat de les quals prové del plantejament metafòric.

Pel que fa a les connotacions estilístiques (d'acord amb l'àmbit d'ús que correspon a una determinada UF), Sagrera explica que les unitats registrades als textos rondallístics són d'estil neutre o baix, però que hi apareixen en tanta quantitat que la seva presència és suficient per qualificar els textos de col·loquials. També assenyalava que no apareixen unitats amb connotacions vulgars o argòtiques ni escatològiques. Mossèn Alcover ja va deixar clar que «dins mon Aplech de Ron-

dayes no hi ha element pornogràfic que tant abunda dins totes les literatures populars de tots els pobles y de tots els sigles» (p. 95). Quant a les connotacions geogràfiques, que són conseqüència del caràcter local propi de les manifestacions populars, manifesta que el caràcter local dels textos rondallístics alcoverians reproduceixen tipogràficament les característiques de la fonètica popular i dialectal mallorquina i esmenta els trets dialectals més significatius. Finalment, s'ocupa de les connotacions expressives i de les inferències fixades al costat del significat denotatiu i connotatiu de les UF.

En l'anàlisi pragmàtica, Sàgrera aborda la naturalesa de les UF en ser inserides en el discurs i com i per què hi són introduïdes, i parteix de la teoria dels actes de parla, sobretot per a donar compte de la força il·locutiva. Té present que «les particularitats estructurals, semàntiques i formals de cada unitat són actualitzades en ser usades i que es concreten en cada cas. Per a aquesta tasca i per observar de manera pràctica els diferents aspectes tractats, se centra en l'anàlisi completa de cinc UF, que considera representatives: enunciat de valor específic (*Encara es verd, es jueverd*), locució verbal (*Treure es gat d'es sac*), locució nominal (*Excuses de mal pagador*), locució adjectiva (*Més fresc que una cama-roja*), locució adverbial (*A força de forces*). En tots els casos es tracta d'anàlisis molt completes que interessaran el lector. A més a més, a les pàgines 116-117, l'autora hi afegeix una graella molt didàctica del conjunt de factors tractats en l'anàlisi de les cinc UF suara esmentades.

Finalment, i abans d'entrar en el corpus pròpiament dit, Sàgrera introdueix un apartat de conclusions. Fa consideracions sociolingüístiques molt pertinents pel que fa a la pèrdua d'ús de les UF, però, d'altra banda, davant la dimensió del corpus present, diu, amb tota la raó: «No podem estar de vanagloriar-nos del tresor lingüístic que posseïm i per això mateix de reivindicar forces per evitar una pèrdua irreparable» (p. 123).

El corpus va precedit, com és natural, de les abreviatures utilitzades tant de fonts com de la denominació resultant de la classificació de les UF; està confeccionat amb el criteri alfabètic, per bé que a la fi del llibre hi ha un índex de paraules clau que remet a les pàgines en què es troben les UF que les contenen. Així mateix, s'hi inclou un apèndix amb les fonts utilitzades en l'elaboració del DCVB que exemplifiquen UF del seu corpus, i una bibliografia extensa i pertinent.

El corpus d'UF és molt extens, extensíssim; tanmateix, Sàgrera no n'ha comptat les UF, potser ni calia, perquè el voluminós compendi ja ho deixa entreveure. Però, per una certa curiositat, n'he fet una aproximació i me n'han eixit al voltant de 12.300, déu n'hi do!

En cada article, la unitat fràsica s'hi introdueix en negreta i després s'indica la classe en abreviatura i cursiva (*par.*, *fôr.*, *en.*, *loc. nom.*, *loc. v.*, *loc. adj.*, *loc. adv.*, *loc. prep.*, *loc. conj.*); a continuació, segueix la definició i la font del DCVB o exemples contextualitzats en les rondalles si se n'han trobat i, finalment, les variants (en rodona, negreta i numerades en xifres romanes si n'hi ha més d'una). La base de la majoria d'entrades és el DCVB.

A continuació, reproduiré algun dels articles, per presentar-ne una mostra i fer-ne algunes observacions:

Entre espasa i paret (estar) *loc. adv.* Entre dos perills o dificultats de sentir contrari, que amenacen de dues parts diferents. DCVB. Estava el pobre entre s'espasa i sa paret, si prenia per un vent, mal; si prenia per s'altre, mal també. 'Es port de sa cibolla blanca' **Variants:** I. **Entre l'espasa i la paret (es-**

tar) *loc. adv. Entre dos perills o dificultats de sentit contrari, que amenacen de dues parts diferents. DCVB.*

Entre cul i paret (estar) *loc. v. Estar a un lloc molt estret, on difícilment es poden moure. DCVB. III. Entre dues moles* *loc. v. Estar en una situació difícil d'esquivar per haver-hi perill de cada costat. DCVB.*

Si observem la classificació de les UF en els dos articles, veiem que no hi ha res que justifiqui que en el primer cas es digui que les UF són locucions adverbials i, en el segon, amb UF que tenen la mateixa estructura i funció, es digui que són verbals. I, des del punt de vista diatòpic, com que es tracta d'UF que pertanyen al català general, hauria calgut alguna marca distintiva, com ara: (cat. g.).

Se'n troben altres casos que també presenten contradicció en la classificació:

Encara Déu no és mort *par.* Significa que encara hi ha esperança, encara que humanament dèbil. DCVB.

[...]

Encara no és mort nostre Senyor *en.* Es diu per donar coratge a algú que ha perdut l'esperança. DCVB.

És clar que res no justifica que una sigui parèmia i l'altra es presenti com a enunciat específic. Ni tampoc que apareguin en dues entrades diferents quan es tracta de dues variants.

Cal dir que hi ha articles ben encertats, amb inclusió d'UF del corpus rondallístic que no figuraven al DCVB:

No empatxar-se de raons *loc. v.* No voler saber les causes o motius d'un fet concret per evitar preocupacions. Rond. Mall.: *Le hi he donat perquè no fesses s'injustícia de prendre-li sa pollina! Diu la Reina. -No m'empatx de raons! Diu el Rei. L'has donat i no el pories donar. 'Sa fia d'es carboneret'.*

Per concloure, cal dir, pel que fa a l'anàlisi d'UF del corpus rondallístic, que l'autora ha fet un bon treball, anant molt més enllà del que es podia demanar en un compendi. I ha tingut la sensibilitat d'afegir, als trets característics de les UF, la dimensió folklòrica, cosa que sovint, des d'una perspectiva estrictament lingüística, sol deixar-se de banda. Així doncs, l'aplicació de la teoria fraseològica a l'anàlisi de les UF seleccionades ha estat rigorosa, ben documentada, aclaridora i pedagògica per a un lector que vol introduir-se en la matèria.

Quant al corpus d'UF, ens trobem davant d'un compendi molt interessant, digne seguidor d'aquella magna obra del *Diccionari Català-Valencià-Balear* d'Antoni Maria Alcover i Francesc de Borja Moll, amb la col·laboració de Manuel Sanchis-Guarner. El voluminós aplec d'UF, organitzat, classificat i exemplificat per Sagrera així ho manifesta. Tanmateix, crec que l'autora, des d'una visió unitària i general de la llengua catalana, no hauria d'haver atribuït el corpus en el seu conjunt a les Illes Balears perquè les UF reportades són, en una gran quantitat, compartides per la resta de l'àmbit lingüístic. Una lectura atenta així ho corrobora. Potser sí que caldria una tasca continuadora que ens portés a confeccionar el corpus de fraseologia contemporània de la llengua catalana. Bàrbara Sagrera ja ha iniciat el camí esmerçant molts esforços i molt de temps i l'ha conclòs amb èxit. Ara cal que aquest tresor preuat que l'autora posa a disposició del públic sigui una eina expressiva que millori la llengua catalana dels mitjans de comunicació, de la literatura, dels estudis acadèmics i de les converses col·loquials de cada dia.

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TERCER CONGRESO INTERNACIONAL «POÉTICAS DE LA ORALIDAD». 8-12 de noviembre de 2021

Poéticas de la Oralidad

Ana Rosa GÓMEZ MUTIO

Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México

El Tercer Congreso Internacional «Poéticas de la Oralidad», organizado por el Laboratorio Nacional de Materiales Orales (LANMO), se celebró en noviembre de 2021 en homenaje a Luis Díaz Viana. Reunió a los miembros de la Red Iberoamericana de Estudios sobre Materiales Orales (RIEMO), un conglomerado de 28 grupos de investigación y 193 miembros internacionales.

Tras la inauguración, se leyó un emotivo texto *in memoriam* de Alfredo López Austin. Para abrir los trabajos en homenaje a Luis Díaz Viana, se destacaron sus aportaciones académicas y propuestas teóricas, esenciales para el trabajo interdisciplinario y crítico que se realiza en el LANMO y en la RIEMO. Su conferencia magistral, «El patrimonio oral: teoría y ética de la práctica etnográfica», versó sobre las supuestas diferencias entre la antropología y la etnografía. En ella cuestionó si puede hacerse una división entre las mismas o si, más bien, deben converger en las pesquisas que abordan; además de señalar que el investigador y su contexto se relacionan y trastocan.

Después, se celebró la primera mesa de presentaciones de grupos de la RIEMO con el objeto de que se conocieran el trabajo y las metodologías que desarrolla cada grupo en las etapas de documentación, procesamiento, almacenamiento y análisis de materiales orales. Se presentó el Arxiu de Folklore, que dio cuenta del trabajo y de las publicaciones realizados con los documentos gráficos, sonoros y audiovisuales procedentes del folklore de la zona de Cataluña. El Núcleo de Pesquisa em Literatura Maranhense (NUPLIM) habló sobre su trabajo en comunidades escolares y sobre el estudio de la literatura local reflejado en eventos, publicaciones y trabajos comunitarios. El Instituto de Formación e Investigación en Lenguas (INFIL) comentó las investigaciones y recopilaciones que ha realizado en la pampa gringa y los lineamientos éticos que ha seguido. El Laboratorio de Materiales Orales de Santa Fe expuso la forma de trabajar y la importancia de los protocolos que ha implementado en atención a la memoria de las personas que narran información sensible durante las entrevistas. Finalmente, el Núcleo das Tradições Orais e Patrimônio Imaterial (NUTOPIA) presentó los seminarios y los talleres en los que han reflexionado sobre las tradiciones orales, el patrimonio inmaterial y las políticas de patrimonialización de los saberes tradicionales.

El segundo día, Maria do Perpétuo Socorro Galvão dictó la conferencia magistral «Caminhos do IFNOPAP» donde relató la gigantesca labor de mapear narrativamente la región del Pará (Brasil) desde 1994, en la que se han recopilado 5.300 narraciones, cuyos estudios se han publicado en 23 libros, 90 artículos y un diccionario de mitos.

En la segunda mesa de presentaciones, el grupo *Adugobiri*: etnopoéticas comentó el trabajo horizontal y la dimensión política que sostiene su estructura. Con el apoyo del LANMO, han publicado 16 libros que integran la investigación, la dimensión estética y la labor editorial. Más adelante, se presentó el Laboratorio de Literatura de Tradición Oral (LALTO). Comentaron que integran las labores de

alumnos, docentes e investigadores; los proyectos que lo antecedieron, su relación colaborativa con el LANMO y la publicación del *Manual para la recolección de literatura de tradición oral*. Más adelante, se presentó el Reservorio Universitario de Oficios Tradicionales que ha trabajado con artesanos de la zona tarasca y que ha involucrado a investigadores, alumnos y docentes al realizar fichas de registro de la producción artesanal de la zona y estudios sobre sus cambios sociales, familiares y laborales. Más adelante, se presentó el Laboratorio de Culturas e Impresos Populares Iberoamericanos (LACIPI), un proyecto de estudio y catalogación de impresos populares del siglo xix y xx interinstitucional e internacional. La mesa cerró con la participación del LANMO. Se destacó que las áreas de audio, vídeo y sistemas se encuentran certificadas por normas internacionales. Se presentaron la infraestructura, los miembros y proyectos, así como las publicaciones editoriales, videográficas, académicas y discográficas.

Dorothé Schubarth dictó una conferencia magistral en la que narró que, a partir de 1970, se relacionó con informantes de Galicia de quienes aprendió nanas, relatos y canciones que integran los cinco volúmenes del cancionero gallego. Narró que, a través del respeto, trabó amistad con los miembros de la comunidad y ganó su confianza, por lo que mantiene relación con ellos hasta hoy.

En la tercera mesa de participantes de la RIEMO, el «Laboratorio de Educación y Mediación Intercultural» (LEMI), que trabaja con comunidades de hablantes de lenguas indígenas en busca de la salvaguarda de su patrimonio lingüístico y cultural, habló de la biblioteca y de los materiales didácticos, la capacitación en línea, las consultorías y el apoyo en producción de audio y vídeo que ofrecen. Más adelante, la Cátedra de Patrimonio Cultural Inmaterial Europeo del IEE dio cuenta de los seminarios y publicaciones que han desarrollado, de la organización de congresos sobre las identidades de Castilla y León, y de la honestidad con la que debe conducirse el trabajo de campo con materiales orales. El grupo Poética Sonora MX comentó las sesiones de escucha activa, los talleres, seminarios y congresos que organizan y el modo en que entrevistan a artistas y gestores culturales. Más adelante, el Programa de Estudo e Pesquisa em Literatura Popular (PEPLP), que se concentra en el registro, la catalogación y el análisis de fichas que permiten vincular las investigaciones con la sociedad y con las comunidades de Bahía (Brasil), señaló que han recopilado cuentos y poemas, y expuso la necesidad de contar con comités éticos específicos para las etapas del trabajo de campo.

Se abrió la última mesa de presentación de grupos de trabajo con la participación de Paisajes Orales de México, que ha aprovechado la experiencia en trabajo de campo de sus miembros para realizar entrevistas en mercados mexicanos. A continuación, se habló del contexto histórico de las narrativas que ha recopilado el Grupo de Investigación del Instituto de Estudios Socio-Históricos Fray Alonso de Zamora de la Universidad Santo Tomás. Se explicó la importancia de la palabra en temas relevantes como los desplazamientos forzados, la etnicidad, los grupos armados y las enfermedades. Después, se presentó el Seminario de Estudios sobre Heavy Metal, en el que se habló acerca de las investigaciones sobre música, horror, performance y producción de música metal desde distintas perspectivas teóricas e institucionales, y la importancia de establecer códigos y protocolos de autocuidado en el trabajo de campo. Luego, se presentó a los miembros del grupo Poéticas Orales e Pensamento Decolonial: Perspectivas Teóricas e Metodológicas, quienes explicaron la importancia que tienen la escucha y la consideración de

que el trabajo de campo se realiza con sujetos, no con objetos de estudio. Se presentaron dos libros que han surgido en colaboración con el LANMO. Más tarde, participaron los miembros del Cuerpo Académico Consolidado de la Universidad de Guanajuato, quienes narraron las experiencias que han recopilado con artesanos y narradores orales y de las publicaciones que han surgido a raíz de ello. Finalmente, el grupo Etnografía, Antropología del Arte, Historia, Etnología charló sobre la etnografía en relación a la recopilación de fenómenos sonoros y sobre las producciones que reúnen la labor con comunidades indígenas. Se enfatizó la importancia de mantener ejercicios críticos de reflexión sobre los conceptos que se utilizan en el trabajo de campo.

El último día se realizó una mesa de diálogo en torno al «Código de ética», que se planteó como instrumento de consulta y participación para los miembros de la RIEMO, quienes lo aprobaron tras discutir inquietudes y propuestas metodológicas sobre las distintas etapas de trabajo con materiales orales.

JORNADA DE LA CÀTEDRA JOSEP ANTON BAIXERAS DE PATRIMONI LITERARI CATALÀ, «MIRADES INTERDISCIPLINÀRIES SOBRE LA LLEGENDA I EL MITE». Tarragona, 13 d'octubre de 2021

Mirades interdisciplinàries sobre la llegenda i el mite

Sílvia VEA VILA

Universitat Rovira i Virgili, Tarragona

La Càtedra Josep Anton Baixeras de Patrimoni Literari Català, del Departament de Filologia Catalana de la Universitat Rovira i Virgili (URV), va dedicar la seua vuitena jornada a fer una mirada, des de la perspectiva de diverses disciplines, al món de llegenda i el mite. Aquesta jornada –amb les restriccions de la pandèmia de la covid-19 superades– es va realitzar de manera presencial la tarda-vespre del dia 13 d'octubre del 2021.

Les conferències que s'hi van poder escoltar van ser pronunciades per diferents professors de la Universitat Rovira i Virgili i van ser les que segueixen: Montserrat Duch va tractar l'ús de la mitologia i la simbologia que s'hi relaciona en el període de la Guerra Civil Espanyola amb «Mitologia i simbologia en l'espai públic en la guerra del 1936-1939». Maria Ramon Cubells va dissertar sobre el mite d'Odisseu com a paradigma del subjecte modern representant d'un món il·lustrat, postmític, amb «Ulisses i les sirenes o de la dialèctica entre mite i raó». Emili Samper, amb «Mites i vinyetes: un viatge al món del còmic», va incidir en el tema de la jornada des d'aquesta manifestació artística, i va discórrer sobre personatges –com Thor, Hèrcules, Superman o Wonder Woman– i històries –com, per exemple, el mite de Pandora– representats en còmics. Per acabar, Joana Zaragoza hi va aportar una mirada feminista amb «Empoderades subjugades», amb la qual va dissertar sobre mites femenins de la Grècia clàssica que, constantment subjugats per Zeus –garant del patriarcat–, van perdre qualsevol possibilitat d'empoderament.

Tot seguit, Carme Oriol va fer la presentació del darrer *Quadern de la Càtedra*, dedicat a Palmira Jaquetti, el qual incloïa els textos que Neus Real, Montserrat Palau, Esther Navarro, Josefina Roma i Joan de la Creu Godoy van pronunciar en la Jornada de la Càtedra Baixeras del 2021.

En acabar, es va lliurar la beca Josep Anton Baixeras - Fundació Privada Mútua Catalana a l'estudiant de doctorat Anna Domingo Palau.

La jornada es va cloure amb l'espectacle, «El romanç de les històries naturals», interpretat per Carles Belda. El narrador, cantant i músic va fer una adaptació de *Les històries naturals* de Joan Perucho, presentant un viatge musical des del Maestrat a la Cerdanya, passant per Pratdip, Gadesa, Barcelona i Berga per donar a conèixer les vicissituds d'un naturalista liberal capficat a aclarir el misteri d'un vampir carlí.

En resum, una VIII Jornada de la Càtedra Josep Anton Baixeras de Patrimoni Literari Català que encetava una nova temàtica, la de la llegenda i el mite, relacionada amb el patrimoni literari català, i amb una aplaudida cloenda gràcies a l'espectacle dedicat a la coneguda obra de Joan Perucho.

XVI TROBADA DEL GRUP D'ESTUDIS ETNOPOÈTICS «LA REPRESENTACIÓ ETNOPOÈTICA DEL MAL». Girona, 12 i 13 de novembre de 2021

XVI Trobada del Grup d'Estudis Etnopoètics

Àngel VERGÉS I GIFRA

Grup d'Estudis Etnopoètics

La XVI Trobada del Grup d'Estudis Etnopoètics es va celebrar a Girona els dies 12 i 13 de novembre del 2021 en una aula de la Biblioteca de Lletres de la Universitat de Girona i va tenir diverses propostes paral·leles relacionades amb la temàtica de la trobada. La primera d'elles fou un concert d'Aina Palmer, celebrat el dijous 11 de novembre, a les nou del vespre, a l'auditori Josep Viader de la Casa de Cultura de Girona. El concert portava per títol: «Pandemònim: de dimonis a trols, un recorregut musical per la història del mal». Aquest concert va sorprendre els membres del grup per la modernitat, l'originalitat i la contundència de la proposta musical d'aquest grup valencià.

El divendres, 12 de novembre, a les deu del matí, es va iniciar la trobada, dedicada en aquesta ocasió a «La representació etnopoètica del mal», amb dues interessants ponències inaugurals. La primera va anar a càrrec de Xavier Renedo i portava per títol «La representació dels diables en el Viatge al Purgatori de sant Patrici i en altres textos medievals»; la segona ponència inaugural va anar a càrrec de Carla Riera «Bruixes, diables i dracs: imatges llegendàries del mal en la narrativa de Víctor Català». Després de l'esmorzar, gentilesa de la Universitat de Girona, Josefina Roma va presentar una interessant comunicació en la qual les oracions exorcitzadores tenien gran protagonisme: «Ans deslliureu-nos del mal». Tot seguit Vicent M. Garcés continuà el torn de comunicacions amb «Mentre el dimoni dorm. Les figures del mal a les cançons de bressol». Bàrbara Duran va tancar la primera sessió matinal amb la comunicació «El cant com a conjur contra el mal. Transcripció i comentari de variants d'*El comte Arnau* a Mallorca». Després de dinar, Xavier Roviró i Carme Rubio van presentar «La mola: una representació del mal a Osona», i va continuar Alexandre Bataller amb: «“Més mal que el dragó...”». Una visió etnopoètica sobre serps i dracs valencians». Gràcies a la tecnologia es va poder veure en vídeo la comunicació de Tomàs Vibot, que va oferir un interessant cas de bruixeria: «De parricida a fetillera: la base històrica de na Joana de Peguera». Va tancar les comunicacions de la tarda Amparo Rico amb una comunicació molt interessant del mal en el marc del romancer: «Quan el dimoni viu a ta casa. El romanç de “La mala suegra”». Després de la pausa, els membres de la trobada van poder fullejar i adquirir els llibres de temàtica folklòrica que la Connexió Papyrus de Celrà havia posat a la seva disposició al vestíbul de la Universitat de Girona i que es van vendre a un preu simbòlic. Els diners de la venda es van destinar a una sessió de contes que Roser Ros va fer a la biblioteca de Celrà la tardor del 2022.

Tot seguit foren presentats diversos materials bibliogràfics. Xavier Roviró, Carme Rubio i Emili Samper van presentar *Miscel·lània etnopoètica*, publicada pel Grup d'Estudis Etnopoètics, volum que és un exemple de la rica activitat dels membres del grup ja que, malgrat que el mal pandèmic va provocar l'anul·lació de la trobada del grup l'any 2020, els membres del GEE van decidir en assemblea continuar amb l'edició del volum anual. Tot seguit, Carme Oriol va fer esment de les activitats i publicacions relacionades amb l'any dedicat a Palmira Jaquetti, i del

llibre *A History of Catalan Folk Literature*. Emili Samper s'hi afegí per ressenyar el darrer número de la revista *Estudis de Literatura Oral Popular*, publicat per la Universitat Rovira i Virgili. Samper presentà, també, el volum *La llegenda*. Tot seguit, Bàrbara Duran presentà: *Deixem lo dol. Goigs i músiques de Pasqua al tercer mil·lenni* i *Les cantadores de Maria de la Salut*. Joana M. Serra presentà *La cuina del Tradicionari. Un recorregut pel calendari gastronòmic de Mallorca* i el *Calendari folklòric de Mallorca. Volum Tardor*. Per acabar, Joan Borja presentà tres llibres: *Sant Vicent Ferrer en l'imaginari popular valencià*, *Enric Valor, memòries* i *Valor, Maria!*

Després de la presentació dels materials bibliogràfics, la trobada va seguir al local del Foment de Girona on va tenir lloc un nou concert d'Aina Palmer, en aquest cas dedicat a «Música i folklore, concert interactiu». Per al concert, els membres del Grup d'Estudis Etnopoètics que eren en aquesta trobada van escriure una definició del que representava el mal per a cadascun d'ells. Aquestes definicions van ser llegides per la cantant del grup, Aina Monferrer, en el marc del concert. El grup valencià va repartir un fullet explicatiu molt interessant dels concerts: «El mal i el folklore valencià, reflexions amb la música d'Aina Palmer». El grup va interpretar deu peces musicals: «Mareta», «Matidelta», «Chimo Bravo», «La Pastora», «Sega 2», «Fusilao», «Sandvitxtroo», «Cant de Batre», «Joventut Alcaloide» i «Aixarquia».

El dissabte, 13 de novembre, va començar amb la comunicació de M. Magdalena Gelabert sobre «Les dones i el mal a l'*Aplec de Rondalles Mallorquines* d'Antoni M. Alcover». Va continuar Caterina Valriu amb «Personatges malvats en el llegendari del Corpus Penya-Arxiduc: una aproximació». Ronald Puppo va presentar «A la recerca del mal en el poema *El mal caçador* de Joan Maragall» i Joan Borja «La representació del mal en les *Rondalles valencianes* d'Enric Valor». Finalment, es van presentar dues comunicacions que van mostrar diverses formes singulars del mal. Àngel Vergés va presentar «*El mal el té la CUP: Folklore on line* abans del *pas al costat* d'Artur Mas» i Emili Samper, per la seva banda: «La metàfora del zombi com a expressió del pànic a les epidèmies». Tot seguit, es va fer una pausa per esmorzar per continuar amb l'assemblea anual del Grup d'Estudis Etnopoètics. En aquesta assemblea es va decidir celebrar la trobada següent a Menorca, a la ciutat de Maó, els dies 4 i 5 de novembre del 2022. Es va triar el tema del cançoner, ja que enguany se celebra el centenari de l'Obra del Cançoner Popular de Catalunya. Després de dinar, el periodista i escriptor Gerard Bagué va conduir una visita guiada per la «Girona pecadora», pel Barri Vell de la capital gironina, acte que va cloure la XVI Trobada del Grup d'Estudis Etnopoètics. A banda de les universitats habituals que col·laboren anualment en la trobada (Universitat d'Alacant, Universitat de les Illes Balears i Universitat Rovira i Virgili), cal destacar les aportacions de diverses entitats i institucions que van fer possible l'èxit d'aquesta trobada gironina: l'Institut d'Estudis Gironins, la Universitat de Girona amb la Càtedra de Patrimoni Literari Marià Àngels Anglada - Carles Fages de Climent i la Càtedra Ferrater Mora, la Casa de Cultura de la Diputació de Girona, el Foment de Girona i l'associació Connexió Papyrus.

ACTE D'HOMENATGE A JOSEP MASSOT I MUNTANER AMB MOTIU DEL SEU 80È ANIVERSARI. Institut d'Estudis Catalans, 13 de desembre de 2021

Homenatge a Josep Massot i Muntaner amb motiu del seu 80è aniversari

Caterina VALRIU LLINÀS

Universitat de les Illes Balears, Palma

El 13 de desembre del 2021 es va celebrar, a la Sala Prat de la Riba de l'Institut d'Estudis Catalans (IEC), un acte d'homenatge a Josep Massot i Muntaner, organitzat conjuntament per la Institució de les Lletres Catalanes i l'Institut d'Estudis Catalans. El 3 de novembre proppassat Josep Massot (Palma, 1941) va complir vuitanta anys, i el món de la cultura li volia retre homenatge. Dissortadament, el 24 d'abril del 2022 —just quatre mesos després—, el pare Massot moria a Montserrat i ens deixava orfes de la seva saviesa i bonhomia. Ens queda, això sí, el llegat d'una obra immensa i el record d'un mestre generós, abnegat i cordial.

L'acte d'homenatge es va iniciar amb un parlament de la presidenta de l'IEC, la lingüista Teresa Cabré. Seguidament, varen prendre la paraula la senyora Izaskun Arretxe, com a directora de la Institució de les Lletres Catalanes, i el pare Manel Gasch, abat de Montserrat. En el seu parlament, Cabré va destacar el paper cabdal de Josep Massot en la cultura catalana dels últims seixanta anys des de diverses facetes. Precisa que l'acte era, alhora, un reconeixement i una festa a un dels *homenots* de la cultura catalana. Per la seva banda, Arretxe va fer notar que no només se celebraven els vuitanta anys de vida de Josep Massot, sinó els cinquanta de la seva ordenació sacerdotal i també el mig segle al capdavant de les Publicacions de l'Abadia de Montserrat, una editorial de referència arreu del país i una de les més antigues d'Europa. Tota una vida, doncs, dedicada a l'estudi i el treball, la difusió i la consolidació de la nostra cultura. Massot —digué— destaca per la seva constància, l'ampli ventall d'interessos culturals i per una extraordinària capacitat de treball. Des d'una altra perspectiva, l'abat Gasch es va referir a Josep Massot com a monjo benedictí al servei del país i la cultura. La seva contribució al patrimoni cultural és una aportació a la comunitat feta des de la humilitat. I això, el treball valuós i incansable, s'insereix en la regla de sant Benet, que postula la dimensió espiritual de la feina com a peça clau de la vida monàstica. Una altra personalitat que es va afegir a l'homenatge va ser la consellera de Cultura de la Generalitat de Catalunya, la senyora Natàlia Garriga, que va participar-hi mitjançant un enregistrament. Garriga també va agrair la tasca de Massot i va destacar que és un referent tant en el camp de la recerca com en el de l'edició. La primera part de l'homenatge es va cloure amb una síntesi de Teresa Cabré, que remarcà el seu servei a la catalanitat des de la lleialtat i el seu caràcter de treballador infatigable.

La segona part de l'homenatge va tenir un caràcter menys institucional, més personal. Va ser una conversa entre Margalida Tomàs, historiadora de la literatura, i el mateix Josep Massot, en un to distès i de companyonia. Es passà, després, a una taula rodona, moderada per Lluïsa Julià. Hi participaren la folklorista i catedràtica de la Universitat Rovira i Virgili Carme Oriol; el professor de la Universitat de Vic i editor Manuel Llanas; la investigadora i professora de la Universitat de València Carme Gregori; Joan Martí, membre de la Secció Filològica de l'IEC, i Ramon Pinyol, president de la Secció Històrico-Arqueològica de l'IEC. Cada un dels partici-

pants es referiren a una o altra faceta professional de Josep Massot: filòleg, editor, historiador, folklorista, etc. i en lloaren l'excel·lència. A continuació, la cantant mallorquina Maria del Mar Bonet i el músic valencià Borja Penalba interpretaren algunes cançons del seu repertori, entre les quals destacaren les d'arrel popular. Ens consta que Josep Massot era un gran admirador de Maria del Mar Bonet com a cantant i de la seva tasca de recuperació de melodies tradicionals.

Ja a la part final de l'homenatge, es va reprendre el to més institucional amb el parlament de la senyora Laura Borràs, presidenta del Parlament de Catalunya i filòloga de formació. Com ja havien fet els altres participants, Borràs lloà la figura de Josep Massot, destacà els diversos caires de la seva dedicació a la cultura, el mesurament vers les noves generacions i el rigor en totes les tasques que desenvolupava. Manifestà la seva admiració i estima per un savi que honora la cultura catalana i la projecta més enllà de les nostres fronteres.

Finalment, l'acte es va tancar amb unes vibrants paraules de l'homenatjat. Josep Massot, content i profundament emocionat, agrai la mostra d'afecte i la valoració de la seva tasca, sostinguda al llarg de sis dècades. Recordà els anys d'universitari —en un període especialment dur de la dictadura franquista, quan la cultura catalana era perseguida des de tots els àmbits—, l'estreta vinculació amb l'IEC, la tasca com a professor a la universitat, l'important paper de l'Abadia de Montserrat en la seva vida personal i professional, els progressos de la cultura catalana al llarg del temps i la coneixença i la col·laboració amb gent que treballa pel país. Manifestà, però, la seva preocupació per la regressió cultural i lingüística en alguns àmbits i pels atacs als nostres drets nacionals i culturals. Massot es mostrà disposat a seguir treballant, incansable, per la cultura i el país. Així es va cloure un acte emotiu i sentit. Poc esperàvem que just li restessin quatre mesos de vida. El 24 d'abril —l'endemà de l'assenyalat dia de Sant Jordi— el pare Massot va morir a Montserrat. La mort de Josep Massot és una pèrdua irreparable, el seu llegat és i serà una peça clau de la catalanitat.

Normes per a la tramesa i publicació d'originals

La revista *Estudis de Literatura Oral Popular* publica aportacions científiques originals. El Comitè Científic, amb l'assistència del Consell de Redacció i d'especialistes aliats a la Universitat Rovira i Virgili, valora els originals entregats i aprova la conveniència o no de la seva publicació.

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Els articles poden estar escrits en català, anglès, aragonès, castellà, francès, gallec, italià, occità i portuguès.

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(a) articles: 8.000 paraules, incloent bibliografia, annexos i figures (gràfics, fotografies, mapes, etc.); en l'apartat Dossier monogràfic els coordinadors poden establir extensions diferents;

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3. TÍTOL I AUTORIA

(a) títol inicial (en lletra Times New Roman (TNR), mida 14, en negreta i centrat);

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(a) resum, en l'idioma original del text i en anglès, de 200 paraules, que mostri els continguts i els resultats del treball (en lletra TNR, mida 10, en cursiva, alineat a la dreta i a l'esquerra i interlineat senzill);

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Exemple: ORIOL, Carme; Josep M. PUJOL (2008): *Index of Catalan Folktales*. Folklore Fellows' Communications 294. Helsinki: Suomalainen Tiedekatemia.

ii) Capítols o apartats de llibres: COGNOM, Nom (any): «Títol del capítol». Dins Nom COGNOM (ed.): *Títol del llibre*. Lloc d'edició: Editorial, p. x-y.

Exemple: DÉGH, Linda (1972): «Folk narrative». Dins Richard M. DORSON (ed.): *Folklore and folklife. An introduction*. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, p. 54-83.

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Exemple: PUJOL, Josep M. (1994): «Variacions sobre el diable». *Revista d'etnologia de Catalunya* núm. 4 (febrer 1994): 44-57.

iv) En els documents que es poden trobar a Internet, s'haurà d'indicar, a més de la citació correcta, l'adreça sencera i la darrera data d'accés.

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Example: DÉGH, Linda (1972): «Folk narrative». In Richard M. DORSON (ed.): *Folklore and folklife. An introduction*. Chicago/London: The University of Chicago Press, p. 54-83.
 - iii) Articles in journals or periodicals: SURNAME, Name (year): «Title of the article». *Title of the Journal* no. x (date): y-z.
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Aquest onzè número de la revista *Estudis de Literatura Oral Popular* inclou un monogràfic sobre les llegendes contemporànies i està format per cinc articles que evidencien especialment les formes que van més enllà d'aquest gènere narratiu i que troben en les formes actuals de comunicació el millor espai on moure's, difondre's i expandir-se, reflectint, alhora, tot allò que ens preocupa avui dia.

The eleventh issue of Studies in Oral Folk Literature includes a monograph on contemporary legends and comprises five articles. It especially illustrates forms that go beyond the narrative genre and that find an ideal space in which to move, propagate and expand in current means of communication, while at the same time reflecting everything that concerns us today.

